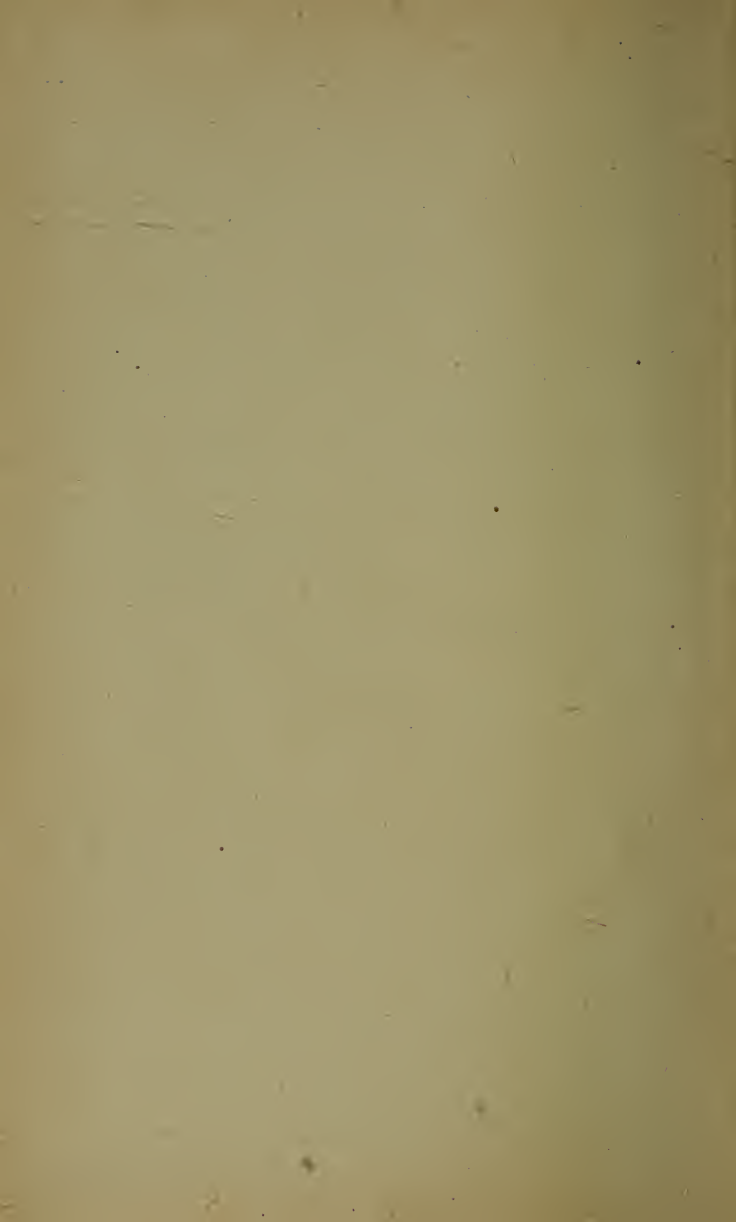


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Beirut.

BOY TRAVELERS IN ARABIA:

OR,

FROM BOSTON TO BAGDAD:

INCLUDING

PICTURES, SKETCHES, AND ANECDOTES
OF THE WANDERING ARABS,

AND OF THE CITY

“OF GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.”

By DANIEL WISE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF “SUMMER DAYS ON THE HUDSON,” “OUR MISSIONARY
HEROES AND HEROINES,” ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

“How the earth burns! Each pebble underfoot
Is as a living thing with power to wound.
The white sand quivers; and the footfall mute
Of the slow camel strikes but gives no sound,
As if they trod the air, not solid ground.”

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CRANSTON & STOWE.

1885.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

LADY BLUNT'S interesting account of her journey across the Syrian Desert to Bagdad, in 1877-8, suggested the writing of the present volume. Her observations on the habits of the Arabian nomads, whose wanderings include the regions lying near the river Euphrates, and with whom she and her husband traveled and encamped awhile, combined with the descriptions of Burckhardt, Colonel Chesney, Layard, Ridgaway, Field, etc., constitute the basis on which this book is constructed. Gibbon and other standard historians are authorities for its historic facts. Hence the only fictitious element in it is the two boys and their instructors, who are here supposed to make the trip from

Boston to Bagdad. The reader is made to behold *actual* scenes and to comprehend *real* incidents by means of the lips and eyes of imaginary personages. By this simple invention the writer is vain enough to think that he imparts considerable valuable information in a form adapted to secure the attention and awaken the interest of youthful readers, to whom it might not be attractive in a more sober and didactic dress. He has aimed to blend entertainment with instruction.

DANIEL WISE.

ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY.

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BOY TRAVELERS IN ARABIA.

CHAPTER I.

BETWEEN BOSTON AND ALEPPO.

THE first scene of this narrative is in the spacious parlor of a Boston merchant, whose home was one of those tall brick mansions which overlook the beautiful Common of which Bostonians are so justly proud. Two brothers are standing together and looking with evident interest on a handsomely-bound book which lies open on the center-table before them. The elder of the two is about sixteen years old. He is of medium height, stout, and somewhat clumsily built. His complexion is florid, his eyes large and gray, and his nose so badly shaped as to partly spoil what might otherwise have been a very pleasing face. His name is Ronald.

His brother, named Richard, is a tall, thin,

blue-eyed lad of nearly fifteen. His wide brow and almost Roman nose betoken thought and energy, and yet there is something in his expression which makes one think that he is inclined to look on the dark side of things. Perhaps their conversation may interest us.

Having glanced at the illustrations in the volume before them, Ronald puts it under his arm, and remarks:

"I am glad grandpa thought of giving me the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments' for my birthday present. It is just the very book I have been wishing for this many a day."

"So am I," replied the other. "I once read 'Aladdin, and the Wonderful Lamp,' which I see is one of its tales, and I want to know more about the genii who are said to have done such wonderful things in that old Eastern world to which this book relates; but we must hurry up. I see our fellows getting ready for a row on the pond. Let us go."

A pebble may turn the course of a streamlet, and little things often give a new direction to

the lives of boys and girls. It was a trivial matter for the grandfather to give Ronald Pelham a copy of the "Arabian Nights;" yet it actually put an event into the lives of Ronald and his brother, of which neither he nor they so much as dreamed.

Its first effect was to fill their imaginations with pictures of the strange life described in that charming volume. They both read it over and over again, and during the following week they could scarcely talk of any thing else besides Aladdin, Sindbad the Sailor, the Forty Thieves, the famous Haroun-al-Raschid, and his beautiful queen, Zobeide. Their excessive talk about these characters was becoming tiresome to their parents, and their playmates had begun to laugh at them, and even to nickname them, one Aladdin and the other Haroun, when a visitor appeared at their home whose conversation led to a desire on their part to visit the land where the heroes and heroines of their imagination once lived, such of them at least as were real personages, and not imaginary characters.

This desire had its birth at their dinner-table, while they sat as silent, but interested, listeners to the talk of their visitor, whom I must now formally introduce to your special notice.

This gentleman's name was Dr. Winterton Benedict, the elder brother of Mr. George Benedict, who was private tutor to these Pelham boys. He was a tall, finely-formed gentleman, with a dark complexion, black, piercing eyes, prominent Roman nose, a heavy beard, and a carefully-trimmed moustache; and, as Richard whispered to his brother, he looked every inch a traveler. Though educated for the medical profession, he spent much of his time traveling in foreign lands. He had inherited considerable wealth from an aunt, and could, therefore, afford to indulge his passion for travel. He had been over Europe, had visited Egypt and Palestine, and had traversed considerable portions of India and China. He had also mastered several foreign languages. During the conversation alluded to above he had answered many inquiries concerning those two

countries, and just as they were about to leave the table Mr. Pelham said :

“Well, doctor, you are indeed a great traveler. May I ask what country you intend to visit next?”

“I am not quite decided yet, Mr. Pelham. My inclination, at present, is to follow in the track described by Lady Anne Blunt, in her ‘Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates.’ I want to see the land of the ancient caliphs, and to visit the once famous city of Bagdad; to view the ruins of the ancient and once mighty cities of Babylon and Nineveh, and to become somewhat acquainted with the Arabian tribes who wander in the great desert which borders the historic river Euphrates.”

Ronald’s eyes sparkled with excitement as the doctor mentioned these names, and nudging his brother’s arm, he whispered :

“I wish he would take us with him; don’t you, Dick?”

“Not he,” replied Richard, in a scornful half-whisper. “He don’t look like the sort of fel-

low to be bothered with young fellows like us."

Their whisperings were not low enough to escape the ear of Mr. Pelham. He looked thoughtfully into the faces of his two sons, and after a few minutes of silent thought, he turned toward his visitor, and said :

"Dr. Benedict, how would you like to take my two youngsters here under your wing, and show them the city where their great hero, Haroun-al-Raschid, once lived and reigned?"

"That question cannot be answered without consideration, sir. Perhaps I might do it if my brother, their tutor, were to go with them; not otherwise, certainly."

The two boys were greatly excited by the bare suggestion of the possibility of treading the streets where the caliph of their imagination once reigned in splendor, and yet jested in so many odd disguises with his subjects. They scarcely dared to hope that this brief talk would lead to any thing more than talk, though they knew their father rarely made a proposal without

some serious purpose to carry it into effect. On quitting the dining-room Mr. Pelham bade them go to their sports, and when they left the house they were so absorbed in the issue of the question to be discussed by their father with the tutor and the doctor, that they could not enter into their usual after-dinner games, but lounged under the wide-spreading elms which shaded the mall not far from their home.

Mr. Pelham, however, was strongly inclined to give his sons the benefit of a trip to Bagdad. They were growing very fast, and were well advanced in their preparations for college, and he thought a trip to the Euphrates and Tigris with such an experienced traveler as the doctor would benefit them in mind and body. Their mother, though reluctant to part with them so long, offered no positive objection to their going. His wealth made him indifferent to the expense involved. Finding Mr. George Benedict, the private tutor of his sons, more than willing to make the journey, he, after a full and free talk with the brothers, agreed to send his sons in

their company. The doctor, whose experience as a traveler fitted him to be a safe guide, consented to take the party across the great Arabian desert to the city of the caliphs, and beyond, if it should be thought best after reaching Bagdad to go farther.

Ronald and Richard were noisily gleeful when informed of this arrangement. Their playmates said they were "a pair of crazy loons," and so demonstrative were they around the house while their outfit was in preparation that their good mother's patience was sorely tried by their antics. But as the doctor, like a sensible traveler, required their outfit to be limited by their probable actual needs, and as the autumn was already well advanced, the time soon came when they were to say that "good-bye" to father and mother and near relatives, which, in spite of the gleefulness of their anticipations, brought sharp pangs to their hearts and tears to their eyes. Yet those cheerless words were said at last, and they sped by rail to New York, took steam-ship to Havre, whence they passed through

France to Marseilles. At this port they took steam-ship for Alexandretta or Scanderoon, on the coast of Syria. Alexandretta is the port of Aleppo, which was the city which they intended to make their starting-point for the great Arabian Desert.

Their experience on the voyage, first to Havre, then from Marseilles to Alexandretta, is passed over because it was not marked by any thing strange or uncommon. They met with some heavy storms and had to pay the usual tribute of seasickness demanded by old ocean of most landsmen; but of the whole passage Roland wrote to his mother, "It's no fun to be seasick, but after all it's not as bad as it might be, and, on the whole, we had a jolly time in crossing both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea."

Let us, therefore, imagine our party just landed from the French steamer. The tall Dr. Benedict is walking up from the landing-place, Professor George Benedict, less robust and more genial in aspect than his brother, is standing still with his two pupils. The three are gazing

with a curiosity natural to travelers to ascertain if they can, to what sort of a place they have come. Richard, as you now see him, wears an aspect of disappointment. Having just taken a view of the mud huts which make up the Syrian village of Alexandretta, he turns toward his genial-faced tutor and exclaims :

“Professor, this place is nothing but a swamp ! It’s a regular frog town ; it makes me sick to look at it ! The houses are mostly mud shanties ; there isn’t a decent building in it—no inn, no church, no mosque ? Don’t you think we had better signal the steamer and go to some place worth looking at ? ”

“That’s just like you, Richard,” quickly replied his brother. “You always were very difficult to please. For my part, I think we had better push on as quickly as we can. I dare say we shall find something ahead worth seeing. So cheer up, old fellow, and don’t act like a baby ! ”

“Very sensibly said,” added the professor, with one of his pleasant smiles. “We have

come to Asia to see men and things as they are, not as we would like them to be, nor as they were in the olden time. This land was glorious once, but it is shorn of its glory now. Even this town at one time was a thriving place. Two great English trading companies formerly carried on an immense traffic with the Eastern world through this port. Vast caravans came in here from Bagdad with bales of wool, costly shawls, aromatic spices, and other valuable articles. British ships landed cargoes of European goods to be exchanged for those sent from India, Persia, and other Eastern countries. But after it was found cheaper to send and receive goods to and from the distant East by ships, that old traffic fell off greatly, although there is still not a little merchandise taken by caravans between this port and the towns of the Euphrates and Tigris Valleys. Nevertheless, Scanderoon is like a broken-down merchant."

"Scanderoon! Why I took this place to be Alexandretta, professor!" exclaimed Richard.

"You are correct, my dear boy, and so am I.

It was formerly called Scanderoon; it is now Alexandretta—but see! here comes the doctor, and he has evidently found one European gentleman here at least. There is a native with him, too, who is by no means a bad-looking fellow.”

The boys looked in the direction of the little hamlet, and were at once greatly interested by the gay dress of the native who was following the senior Mr. Benedict. The lively Ronald, after glancing at the Syrian, exclaimed:

“There’s something Oriental for you, Richard! That fellow looks gay enough to be a performer in Barnum’s greatest show on earth! How grandly he struts in his red morocco boots! I guess he thinks himself equal to a pasha of ever so many tails. And see! his clothes are all made of striped cotton or other stuff. Turban, jacket, trousers, all striped. We will name him Zebra. Ha! ha!”

The near approach of the doctor and his companions put a speedy end to the laugh caused by Ronald’s queer little speech. They

were then told that the doctor had made a friend of a gentleman belonging to the office of the British consul, that the gayly-clad Syrian was a carrier, or muleteer, who belonged to Aleppo, and was ready to furnish horses and mules and to guide them to that city, which was the first important point on their proposed trip to Bagdad. By starting as soon as possible, this Syrian told them, they could reach Beilán, nine miles distant, before night. This arrangement being made, the carrier started to get his horses and mules ready, while the doctor, guided by the friendly consul's clerk, made haste to purchase bread, onions, pepper, salt, oil, etc., sufficient, with what could be bought at the khans on the route, to sustain them during their journey to Aleppo.

The bay at Alexandretta is one of the most beautiful sheets of water on the Syrian coast. The professor called the attention of the boys toward it by asking:

“Did you ever see a stretch of blue water glistening beneath such a cloudless sky as this?”

It is nearly land-locked, you see, and those distant hills give it a fine background."

"It's splendid!" replied Ronald, entering warmly into the spirit of his teacher. But Richard, less observing than his brother, said:

"Yes, it's well enough in its way, but scarcely worth coming all the way from America to see."

"How grumpy you are to-day, Dick!" exclaimed Ronald, laughing.

"Never mind," observed the professor. "Perhaps he'll feel better when he gets among the Arabs of the desert, as he will after a few days."

Richard looked vexed, but said nothing, until after walking with the others to view the ruins of a large building once owned by one of the great British trading companies, and wandering about the narrow, muddy streets, they returned to the shade of the hut which held their baggage. They had been there but a short time when the good-humored Ronald shouted:

"Hurrah! here comes our Zebra."

“Yes, here comes the muleteer with his man, with ponies for us and mules for our baggage,” said the professor. “My brother has lost no time. We shall soon be on the road.”

The sight of the ponies had a cheering influence on Richard's temper. He and his brother made a rush for the rough-looking creatures, each wishing to select the liveliest of the lot for his own use. While they were getting mounted Ahmed, the carrier, and his attendants strapped the baggage to the patient mules, and in due time the word was given to start.

Our party moved in high spirits. They rode slowly through the wet streets and along the rude causeway which crossed the marsh, and soon found themselves ascending the mountain road toward Aleppo. To their surprise, they met and passed many travelers, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Frenchmen, and Jews. Some were walking, others riding on camels, mules, donkeys, and horses. These people seemed intent on their own business, whatever

it was, and, with one or two exceptions, did not even salute our party. There was nothing in this mountain road to excite remark by our travelers except when, after crossing a brook which babbled musically through a romantic ravine, Ronald exclaimed :

“Look there, Dick! As sure as my name’s Ronald, there’s a telegraph wire.”

“That’s so,” replied his brother, “and it’s the first thing I’ve seen worth looking at since we set foot in Syria. I had supposed the Turks hadn’t sense enough to know the value of the telegraph or brains enough to use it.”

“O, I dare say it was built and is run by the French or English,” replied Ronald, digging his heels, as he spoke, against the sides of his lazy little pony.

After riding about nine miles over a rough, stony road, in little more than two hours, our travelers came to a town named Beilán, built on the steep sides of a deep ravine. They halted near the khan, or caravansary, and while the doctor, who alone of the party could speak

Arabic, was talking to Ahmed, the boys, still keeping their saddles, viewed the scene before them, making such remarks as it suggested. The first to speak was the critical Richard, who remarked :

“A great improvement this on Alexandretta, isn’t it, Ronald ?”

“I should say so, Richard. The houses here are solid stone, and there are lots of them—several hundred, I should think. But how old they look stuck on the sides of this deep cut !”

“They look like great big bird-cages,” added Richard, laughing.

“And they have flat roofs,” said Ronald ; “at least most of them have. I wonder why they build them so.”

“Because flat roofs are best suited to this climate and the habits of the people, who often find it pleasant, during their hot summers, to sleep on them at night,” remarked the professor. “But, see ! my brother beckons us to follow him. He doesn’t mean to have us lodge in the khan to-night, apparently.”

The professor was right. His brother had learned at Alexandretta that, although the greater number of the people of Beilán were Turks, there were a few native Christians in the town. Aided by Ahmed, he had found one of their houses, and arranged to lodge with its owner, whose name was Jakoob. Guided by the doctor, our party soon found themselves in the large square room of Jakoob's house. It was a comfortable apartment, with a raised platform running around its walls, and even Richard was quite content to lodge in it. Its owner soon provided them a supper consisting of boiled rice, boiled eggs, and tea. To their surprise and pleasure, their host, with his family, consisting of twelve souls, assembled for evening prayers in this room. They sang hymns, and Jakoob's son read prayers very devoutly. After this service our party was furnished with mats or rugs to spread upon the platform, and being not a little wearied with the novel experience of the day, slept soundly, and awakened refreshed at an early hour the next morning.

After eating breakfast, also furnished by Ja-koob at a reasonable price, our travelers started early, intending to spend the next night at a khan called Ain Beta. After leaving Beilán they soon reached the highest point of the mountain road, which then gradually descended toward the plain beyond. There was nothing worth noting on their trip to-day, except that it took them ten hours to reach Ain Beta, and that they were very tired when they reached the khan in which they were compelled to lodge the second night.

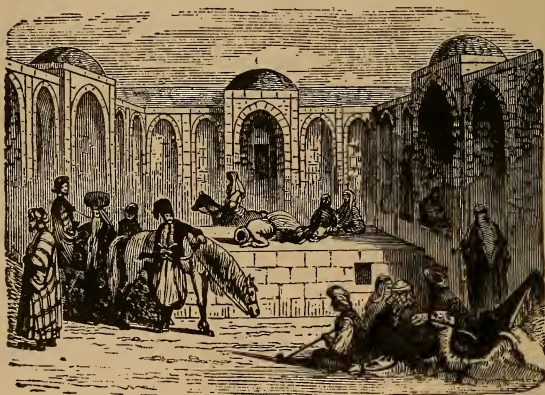
Richard, on dismounting from his tough little pony, peeped into the yard of the khan. It was filled with mules and horses. After looking a moment or two on the scene he turned away with a rueful face. Shrugging his shoulders, he exclaimed :

“Is this what they call a khan? Do we have to lodge among mules?”

“Not exactly,” replied the doctor. “This is the yard. Let us go into the khan itself.”

Passing into the large room for travelers,

they found it like Jakoob's room, in that it was square, with a raised platform along the sides, on which to sleep. A fire was burning in the



INTERIOR OF THE KHAN.

middle of the earthen floor. Turks, both muleteers and travelers, sat around it, some chatting, some cooking amid the smoke which floated about the building, there being no chimney to convey it to the upper air. In one corner was a little shop, at which coffee and food were sold. Our travelers, guided by the doctor, soon found places for their mats on the platform.

The bread and boiled chicken they had brought from Alexandretta, with hot coffee purchased from the shop, made them a welcome, if not a dainty, supper. The chatter kept up by the Turks until midnight prevented them from getting much sleep during the first part of the night, and, feeling obliged to sleep in their clothes, even to their boots, they did not rest very comfortably during its remaining hours. When they were in their saddles after breakfast, Richard gave his opinion of this their first night in a caravansary by saying, rather gloomily :

“This is what I call roughing it with a vengeance.”

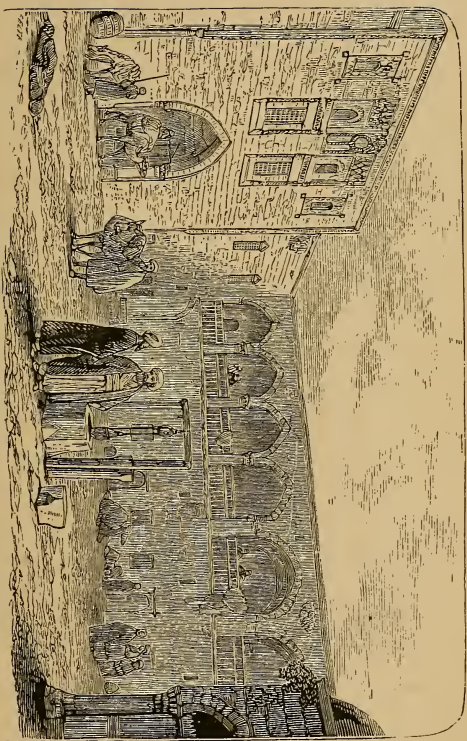
But after riding all that day they had to lodge again in a khan at a place named Termini. The day after they reached Aleppo, seventy miles from Alexandretta. What they did and what they saw there you shall be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

ALEPPO CASTLE AND ALEPPO BUTTON.

IT was late in the afternoon when our travelers rode into Aleppo. While approaching it they had caught glimpses of its decaying beauty from several hill-tops. Its lofty castle, its numerous towers, its slender minarets, and the rich greenery of its surrounding gardens had roused both Ronald and Richard from the weariness of their journey of seventy miles, and made them impatient to reach it before dusk. But their ponies could not be spurred out of their lazy pace, and it was nearly sunset when, amid quite a crowd of other travelers, they found themselves in the court-yard of a caravansary.

The boys, with the professor, after slightly inspecting the interior of the khan, retreated to its outside not at all pleased with the prospect



Khan at Aleppo.



of spending the night with the sorry-looking crowd which was preparing to lodge within its space.

“There are more beggars than gentlemen in that crowd,” remarked Ronald, with a shrug of discontent, which, however, did not prevent him from adding, with a good-humored laugh, “but I guess we’re tough enough to stand it for one night.”

His brother was evidently peevish, though silent. The professor smiled, and said :

“Travelers to ancient places must make up their minds to endure what they cannot cure. To enjoy what is pleasing, they need to be guided by old Chaucer, where he says, ‘Beware, also, to spurn against a nail.’ If they do not, they will return home more bruised than profited. But see! Here comes my brother with a gentleman who might easily pass for a Yankee.”

Dr. Benedict had, indeed, captured, if not a New England Yankee, yet an English gentleman belonging to the British consul’s office, to

whom, having letters, he had previously written. This courteous man was as much delighted to see our travelers as they were to see him, since the presence of either European or American travelers in Aleppo was a rare occurrence. After exchanging the most cordial greetings, he conducted them to the house of a Syrian Christian, whom he had engaged to provide them entertainment.

"There is no nail to spurn against here," remarked Ronald, after they had been feasted on chicken, eggs, bread, and coffee in the neat, wholesome room of this Christian Syrian.

"I rather guess we are in clover for once," replied Richard, whose peevishness had been melted by the relishable food, the comforts of the house, and the gentle courtesy of their Christian host.

After they had satisfied their hunger and seated themselves on the cushions, which covered the benches that ran along the sides of the room, Ronald said to the professor:

"I hardly expected we should find either mis-

sionaries or church members in Aleppo. I thought its people were pretty much all Turks."

Replying to this question the professor said that, while a majority of the inhabitants of Aleppo were Turks, yet many of them were either papists of the Greek Church, Maronites, Armenians, Syrians of mixed races, or Jews. The missionaries of the American Board, he said, had begun preaching the pure Gospel there in 1848, and had formed a small church among them, their converts being won, not from the Moslems, but from those who had been very imperfectly taught, by Greek or Syrian priests, some of the truths of the Gospel. They had found the people inquisitive, but very ignorant, had opened schools for their instruction, and had done some good among the people. For some reason, which he could not give, the mission had been discontinued, and Aleppo was then without a missionary. The Turks did not, as a rule, meddle with their work, though in 1850 they had risen against the nominal Christians of the city, killed many of them, and de-

stroyed a vast amount of their property. "Our host," he said, "is a Syrian Christian, who probably knows little more of Christ than his sacred name."

"I hate those Turks!" exclaimed Richard; "they are as savage as our Indians used to be."

"And are now," added Ronald, "when they get a chance to tomahawk a white man."

"Yes, they are a blood-thirsty race," said the professor, smiling at the vehemence of his two pupils. "And yet, I hardly think we ought to *hate* them; though they have been a scourge to the lands they rule. Still it is our part not to hate, but to pity them for their wickedness and for the woes they thereby bring upon themselves; but their *punishment* belongs to the God of nations, who in due time will smite them with his avenging sword."

"And his terrible sword," the doctor remarked, with a solemnity which made the boys start, "is already out of its scabbard. The doom of the pitiless Turk hangs over him like a storm-cloud ready to burst."

Nothing more was said after these prophetic words, and our party proceeded to place themselves under the spell of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

The next morning our party went out to see this very ancient city. Guided by the friendly consul's clerk, they first crossed a bridge which spans the Koeick, a stream which passes through Aleppo. Pointing down the valley of this little river, Richard exclaimed :

"See, Ronald! yonder are some splendid gardens."

"Yes," observed the Englishman, "those gardens are the most attractive objects we have to show our visitors. We have factories where bright cloths with threads of gold and silver are woven, where cotton prints are made and dyed. In such things you Americans far excel us. But we can afford to be proud of our gardens. They extend continuously for twelve miles along the plain, and are very productive."

After viewing the gardens awhile, they

strolled to the moldering stone walls which, as they saw, inclosed the city.

"These old walls are forty feet high, they extend three miles and a half," said their guide. "You see they are flanked with several towers, and in the days when battles were fought with cimeters, arrows, slings, and javelins they must have made Aleppo a very difficult city to capture, especially as yonder lofty castle commanded the walls, and its garrison could send showers of arrows upon the assailants."

This allusion to the tower led our travelers to look toward a massive structure built on the summit of an earthen mound, two hundred feet high, shaped like a cone, faced with smooth stones, and so steep as to be almost perpendicular. Beneath the mound they saw a depression which was once a broad ditch, sixty feet deep, cut down into the rock, and could formerly be filled with water from adjacent springs. It is thought that the earth taken from this ditch was used to build the mound. The tower itself is built of massive stones. It

has but one gate, which is reached by a covered bridge that spans the spacious moat.

Our travelers gazed with wonder on this mighty fabric.

"It is not known who built it," observed Professor Benedict, who was well posted in ancient history.

"Guess it was the genii who built Aladdin's palace," said Ronald.

"It looks as if it might have required an army of genii to capture it when it was in its original condition," remarked the professor, "though Gibbon tells a romantic story about its conquest by Omar, the Saracen caliph, more than twelve hundred years ago."

"Do tell us about it, professor," said Richard, with eager interest.

Sitting on a heap of rubbish in the shadow of the dilapidated walls of the venerable castle, our travelers were told how Omar, in the year 638, after conquering Jerusalem, sent a large army under the command of the brave Abu Obeidah to capture Aleppo. In stately array,

with gorgeous banners, this proud army appeared before the city demanding its surrender in the name of its prophet, Mohammed. But Youkinna, the valiant chief who defended Aleppo, defied those blood-thirsty Saracens, and they at once began to siege it. In defending the walls, Youkinna lost three thousand of his brave soldiers; but nothing daunted, when driven from the walls he retired into this mighty castle and kept up the conflict through nearly five months. His brother, a monk, less brave than himself, advised him to make peace with the all-powerful Omar. Resenting this counsel, Youkinna stained both his hands and honor by taking his brother's life. The Saracens, to terrify him, cut off the heads of three hundred of his captured men beneath the walls of the castle. Still, with proud defiance, he continued its defense with a persistence which seemed proof against exhaustion.

Abu Obeidah, disheartened by his own losses and by Youkinna's heroic defense, then wrote to the caliph that the hope and patience of his

army were consumed, and that the castle could not be taken.

“Remain before Aleppo until God shall determine the event,” was the caliph’s stern reply.

With this message he sent some Arabs to reinforce his discouraged army. Among them was a gigantic Arabian who had once been a slave. His name was Dames. After serving in the field about forty-seven days, this stout Arab said to the Saracen general :

“Give me thirty men, and I will capture the castle.”

It seemed a rash proposal. Nevertheless, the general accepted it, gave him thirty warriors, and then, to throw Youkinna off his guard, withdrew his army a league from the city, as if he intended to raise the siege. Then Dames and his thirty braves, after climbing with great difficulty the face of the mound, lay in ambush beneath the castle wall, at a spot which seemed to him the easiest to scale. In the darkest hour of the night, he and his followers crept from their hiding-place. Seven of his strongest men

mounted each other's shoulders. The broad back of the Arabian giant was the base on which this living column rested. The topmost man could just reach the battlement. Very cautiously he climbed over it into the castle. As soon as he was in he drew up a comrade with his unfolded turban. In this way the whole band got inside the castle walls, each man exclaiming as he was being drawn up, "O, Apostle of God, help and deliver us!" Then with the stealth of serpents they crept up to the sleepy sentinels, stabbed them with their daggers, and threw them over the battlements.

After these silent deeds of blood, Dames crept into the governor's palace. There he saw Youkinna and his officers rejoicing in high carousals over the supposed retreat of the Saracens. Leaving them at their wine and wassail, he returned to his thirty companions, led them with muffled tread to the one castle entrance, attacked and killed the guard, opened its massive gates, raised the draw-bridge, stood in the narrow pass holding the now-aroused garrison at bay,

until, at the peep of dawn, the Saracens, as agreed beforehand, rushed across the bridge, and after a short but brief struggle raised the standard of their prophet above its battlements. And thus, not by fair and open fight, but by the cunning artifice of a gigantic slave, was this castle of Aleppo captured.

“That General Youkinna deserved to lose his castle,” remarked Richard, after hearing this story. “If he had kept a bright lookout, that giant Arab and his men would have been killed by the sentinels.”

“He was certainly remiss in that he did not suppose the retirement of the Saracens to be a ruse,” said the professor. “But the fact that, after losing the castle, he renounced the Christian religion and became a follower of the false prophet, shows that his character was not very high.”

“I hate turn-coats,” rejoined Richard, “and as Youkinna was one, I’m glad he was whipped out of the castle.”

“Those Saracens were brave fellows,” re-

marked Ronald. "They seem to have swept rapidly over the world like heroes bent on conquest or death."

"Had their rule been as wise as their courage, they might have been benefactors instead of oppressors to the wicked, worn-out races they conquered. But even they had some cowards among them," remarked the doctor.

"Had they, doctor?" exclaimed Ronald. "Please tell us about them."

"That might be too long a tale," replied the doctor. "But since we are talking of Aleppo and its conquerors, I will tell you of Seifeddowlat, who was king of this city some three hundred years after its capture by the brave Abu Obeidah. History tells us that toward the end of the tenth century, Theophania, empress of the Eastern Roman Empire, married a heroic soldier named Nicephorus Phocas. Placed over her splendid army with another man of the same impetuous courage, this general assailed the Saracens in Asia with irresistible force and wrested the principal cities of Syria from their

dominion. When Seifeddowlat, then king of Aleppo, heard how the armies of Cæsar and the Cross had conquered the armies of Mohammed and the Crescent, and that Antioch had been captured by Nicephorus, he seemed like one smitten with fear. Forgetful of his former military glory, he no sooner learned that the conquerors of Antioch were marching toward Aleppo than he hastily retreated without venturing to fight a single battle. When the Romans reached the environs of the city they found his stately palace, which stood outside the walls, deserted, but filled with treasures of arms, gold and silver, and near it an immense stable containing fourteen hundred mules. All this they gladly seized; but when they approached the walls, they found that the soldiers of the fugitive king, more brave than their master, defended them with very great resolution. The walls were strong and resisted the battering-rams of the Romans. Then Nicephorus withdrew his troops to the neighboring mountains, expecting, perhaps, to starve the city into sub-

mission. But the citizens and the soldiers began to quarrel with each other. The former forsook the gates and ramparts to fight with the latter in the market place. The watchful Romans seized this opportunity to surprise their foolish foes. Forcing their way through the unguarded gates they rushed upon the unwary garrison, put every soldier and male citizen to the sword, led ten thousand youths into captivity, collected as much spoil as their beasts of burden could carry away, and committed the remainder to the flames. After ten days of riotous triumph, they marched away, leaving Aleppo, says Gibbon, ‘a naked and bleeding city.’”

“It seems to me,” remarked Richard, “that those Roman Christians were no better than the Saracens.”

“Except in name they were not,” replied the professor. “They had, indeed, little of Christianity besides its name, and its truths, which were little more to them at that date than a dead letter.”

Our party now left the half-ruined old castle and went into the narrow streets. As they sauntered along, looking at the stone houses with which they are lined, the boys noticed a plump little girl, whose rosy cheeks were dotted with red spots about the size of one's fingernail. After she was out of hearing, Ronald turned toward Dr. Benedict and asked :

“Doctor, did you see that girl's face?”

“Yes; she has what is called the Aleppo button.”

“The Aleppo button!” exclaimed both boys, speaking together.

The doctor explained that singular phrase, telling them that it is a small ulcer or pimple which attacks children, as measles do in America. It usually comes on the face, sometimes on the hands and feet. Some have one or two only, others six or seven. The first soon dry up, but new ones keep coming for about a year. Then the disease disappears, and never returns a second time. If let alone the ulcers do no harm. If rubbed or picked, they leave scars

like vaccination marks. The disease is not confined to Aleppo, but is found in many other places, even as far as Bagdad, where it is called the "date mark."

Richard, always alive to the dark side of things, looked very rueful while learning these facts from the doctor, and replied: "Don't you think we had better get out of this place quicker than we came into it? I, for one, don't wish to carry home an Aleppo button on my face."

"It would be a pity to spoil your handsome phiz," replied the doctor, laughing. "But you need not be frightened. Strangers are very rarely ornamented with the Aleppo button."

Richard's face brightened on hearing this. Nudging his brother, he said: "I'm glad of that, aren't you, Ronald? Wouldn't you look beautiful if you were to have an Aleppo button on your little nose, eh?"

Ronald was quite sensitive about his nose, which was not as handsome as it might have been, and impolitely retorted, "Get out!"

“Touchy as you seem to be about your nose, Master Ronald,” said the doctor, “you would, I think, prefer to have it adorned with the Aleppo button to being stricken with a still worse evil which breeds in this city.”

“What is that, sir?” asked Richard, looking intently into the doctor’s face with an expression of alarm.

“The plague!” replied the doctor, with emphasis.

“The plague!” exclaimed the boys, as with one voice.

“Yes, the plague, my boys. It is the pest of the place, and hovers over it like an angel of destruction. It hides in cess-pools and gutters, in accumulations of filth, in pools of slimy water, and in unclean houses. Once in about ten years it quits its hiding-places and spreads a deadly fever throughout the city. Then hundreds, yes, thousands, are smitten with death. Less than a century ago, no less than sixty thousand of its people perished in a short time by the stroke of this terrible pestilence.”

“Sixty thousand!” exclaimed Ronald. “It must have left the place with no one in it.”

“Its population was much larger then than it is now. In 1822 it contained two hundred thousand souls. In that year an earthquake almost destroyed it. It has never since recovered its former numbers. To-day it has probably not more than from a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants.”

“What an unlucky city!” exclaimed Richard. “I don’t think I care to live in it.”

In the course of their walk our party came to a large square tower, called the Belfry of Saint Zacharias, about which their companion, the Englishman, told them a curious legend.

According to this legend, Caliph Omar’s troops had no sooner gained possession of Aleppo than all its Christian churches were turned into mosques. Their towers were used as minarets, and a muezzin appointed to each, that from its summit he might make his call for daily prayer. The first muezzin who did so fell from the tower and was killed. The sec-

ond died in the same shocking manner. The third was an old man, who, fearing the fate of the other two, stopped to pray in the church before ascending the tower stairs. While he was praying an aged man stood before him and said :

“Fear not, I am Zacharias ; I will spare your life if when you cry the prayer-hour from my tower you will add to your call a phrase in Greek, which is in the Christian prayer book.”

This the alarmed muezzin promised to do. His life was, therefore, spared ; and thus the call to worship the true God was joined with the call to pray in the name of the false prophet.

The whole of their first day in Aleppo was spent by our party in traversing the streets, viewing its few sights, and talking of their plans for a journey into the country of the Arabs who lived in the plains beyond.

CHAPTER III.

LAST DAYS IN ALEPPO.

THE weather in Aleppo was so wet, cold, and windy that our travelers were unable for several days after their visit to the castle to be very much out-of-doors. Richard and Ronald chafed somewhat under their enforced confinement to the house, but the doctor and his brother were, as Ronald said, "like busy bees," making preparations for their further journeying into the land of the Arabs. As it was their intention to travel for a time with the Aenezes, one of the principal tribes of those wanderers in the desert, they had to hire servants, purchase horses, mules, cloaks, boots, presents for the sheikhs, and such other articles as were needed for their outfit. They had also to look for some friendly sheikh of the Aeneze tribe to be their guide. They were told, both by the

native Christians and the gentlemen of the British consulate, that with such a guide it would be entirely safe for them to join his tribe of wandering Arabs in their accustomed winter removal from the vicinity of Aleppo to the southern portion of the Syrian desert.

While the doctor and the professor were talking about their plans and preparations, one evening, Ronald asked: "Are not the Arabs big thieves, doctor? Wont they rob and perhaps kill us when we put ourselves in their power?"

"Yes, the Arabs are thieves; Mr. Burckhardt, who traveled much among them, says they are a nation of robbers, whose principal occupation is plunder. An Arab will rob his enemies, his friends, and his neighbors, provided they are not in his own tent. Indeed, he prides himself on being a robber. He glories especially in taking by stealth from his enemies what he is not strong enough to seize by force."

"I guess they are very cunning rogues," re-

marked Richard. "The consul's son told me this morning of a dozen of them who dressed themselves in rags, took bags of flour and salt, with a skin bottle for water, and traveled away from their tribal camp four or five days until they came near the camp they meant to rob. There they hid themselves, like snakes in the grass, until the hour of midnight. Then three of them stole, as noiselessly as our Indians, up to the tents. One of them went near the watch-dogs, which rushed out to bite him. He ran away; the dogs ran after him a long distance from the tents. Meantime one of his fellow-thieves crept up to the camels, which were lying in front of the tent, cut the strings which tied their legs, and then quietly led away a she-camel. The others, as is usual, quietly followed her. On reaching the spot where the other thieves lay hidden they ran and beat off or killed the dogs, which were still at the heels of their companion, and then drove the stolen camels away as fast as they could be made to gallop. Really, doctor, it looks very much like

walking into a lion's den to go among such a gang of robbers. If we go I hope you will give each of us a six-shooter."

"What's the use of a pistol in an Arab camp?" asked Ronald. "Do you think they would give a fellow a chance to use it? Not they! They would steal it from under your pillow while you slept."

"You are right, Ronald," said the doctor. "Pistols would not amount to much. If we had nothing better to trust in than our weapons, we had better not put ourselves into their hands; but we can go among them with perfect safety if we can make one of their tribe our friend, as we shall do before we venture into the desert. Bad as the Arabs are, they never rob or injure a guest. Any man who has a single protector in any one tribe is sure to be treated as a friend, not only by that tribe, but also by all other tribes in friendship with it. With them a guest is sacred. Many Englishmen, years ago, used to go to and from India across this desert, but not one was ever known

to be robbed by any Aeneze guide, or by any tribe in friendship with his. A sheikh will drive as hard a bargain for guiding you as he can, but when once the bargain is made he will be faithful. So I think we may trust to Arab hospitality without fear or *pistols*."

The boys laughed at the doctor's thrust at Richard's pistols. He then told them that he was in treaty with a trusty sheikh named Hassan, and also with an Arab who wished to sell a couple of horses for himself and the professor. If the boys wished, he said, they might go with him on the morrow to see the horses, and, if the weather permitted, to try the ponies he had already purchased for their use.

Of course they did wish to go, because, as Richard remarked, they had not come to Aleppo to sit cooped up on the platform of a gloomy old house which was as dull as a jail. Rain or no rain, they would go to try their ponies.

The next morning, though not rainy, was cold and damp, but the boys were so pleased to be out that they did not mind the biting north

winds. On reaching the consul's office, to which they had already been courteously welcomed, they found Hassan, the sheikh. His tawny face was not very attractive. His deep-set black eyes flashed with light from beneath his bushy black eyebrows, but their expression invited mistrust rather than confidence. His long black hair fell in tresses over his cheeks down to his breast. He was about five feet three inches high. On his head he wore the Arab turban, or *keffie*, made of a yellow cotton and silk mixed kerchief. This kerchief was a square, so folded about his head that one corner fell backward and the other two corners hung over the front of his shoulders in sufficient lengths to cover his face when necessary to protect it from the sun, the wind, or the rain, or, when he wished, to conceal his features. A cord made of camel's hair was tied round his head. Over his cotton shirt or gown he wore a pelisse, with short wide sleeves, made of sheep-skins stitched together. This was his winter coat. His feet were made gay by a pair of yellow boots. As this was the

first Bedouin sheikh the boys had seen they looked at him with curious eyes, while the doctor bargained with him in Arabic, which, of course, they did not understand.

Having agreed with Hassan to conduct them to the encampment of his tribe, the doctor next led the boys to a khan, where he was to meet the owners of the two horses he meant to purchase. The beasts were led out from the court of the khan, but did not commend themselves either by beauty of form or by the smoothness of their hair.

“Can these be Arabian horses?” exclaimed Ronald. “I thought Arabian horses were all handsome and elegant creatures. But these rough, dirty beasts look like hacks which have never had brush or curry-comb on their backs since they were foaled!”

The professor told them that really fine-looking Arab steeds are not as numerous now as in past times, though many that were not high-bred in appearance were excellent travelers, swift in action, and capable of wonderful endur-

ance. As to the unkempt aspect of the animals before them, that was very common, since the Arabs never clean or rub their horses, neither do they keep them inside their tents, but in the open air, yet with the saddle constantly on their backs. This seems like harsh treatment, but the animals, being trained to it, do not appear to suffer. They are very gentle creatures. Their masters caress them like children, feed them on barley, sometimes on dates, in some cases on raw and boiled flesh, and rarely part with them unless forced by poverty to do so.

As it took some time for the doctor to bring the greedy owners of the two horses to accept a reasonable price, the boys, to pass the time, had their ponies saddled and brought out. They mounted, and, despite the mud of the rough road, rode some two or three miles, returning just in time to see the poor Arabs kissing, caressing, and talking to their horses, as if in deep grief at parting with them.

Giving their ponies to an attendant, the boys looked with surprise at the excited Arabs, won-

dering much at their strange conduct. After gazing at them awhile, Richard, stepping to the professor's side, asked :

“Are those fellows crazy, Mr. Benedict?”

“No, not crazy, but grief-stricken; like all Arabs they are reluctant to part with their horses. Their actions remind me of an incident related by a French traveler who saw an Arab parting with a beautiful mare which he had just sold. The fellow wept tears of tenderness, kissed and embraced the animal, wiped her eyes with his handkerchief, rubbed her with his shirt sleeves, and talked to her, saying: ‘My eyes, my soul, my heart! must I be so unfortunate as to sell thee to another master and not to keep thee to myself? I am poor, my antelope; I have brought thee up like a child; I never beat nor chid thee. Thou art pretty, thou art sweet, thou art lovely, my dearest!’ And then, again embracing her and kissing her eyes, he bade her good-bye and sadly went his way.”

“Well,” remarked Ronald, very gravely, “if these Arabs can love their horses like that, they

can't be a very bad set after all. There must be a good spot in them somewhere."

"Very good, my young philosopher!" exclaimed the doctor, laughing. "The fidelity of the Arabs to their guests is one good spot. We will try to find some other virtues in them when we travel with them. But we must not tempt them by putting over much confidence in their virtues."

The day previous to the one fixed on for their departure, being clear and dry, our travelers spent in visiting such portions of Aleppo as they had not yet seen.

The doctor had procured them permission to visit the city jail, and, moved by curiosity, they entered and found it, as Lady Blunt describes it, very unlike their impressions of an Oriental prison. It was in a large square open court, with blocks of buildings on two sides, and walls on the other sides sufficiently high to secure the prisoners, yet not so lofty as to totally shut the adjacent edifices from view. In the buildings were cells, each of which, on the ground

floor, was occupied by three or four prisoners confined for petty offenses. The cells appeared comfortable, their inmates looked like lazy, well-fed fellows, who were kept in order by a jailer by the liberal use of the stick with which he was armed. In the upper story of these cells were murderers and robbers, many of whom were in chains, but bore no other marks of rough treatment.

After leaving the jail, Dr. Benedict said: "Those fellows look 'fat and healthy,' as Lady Blunt says in her book she found them. I suppose their treatment depends, not so much on law or even custom, as on the disposition of the ruling pasha, who can be as cruel as he wishes to be."

The professor then asked the doctor if he could recall what Lady Blunt said about a bold but jovial bandit who was formerly kept in this prison. He replied that he could, and then, as they slowly sauntered along the streets, he told them how a few years ago a Kurd, named Curro, owned a vineyard at Aintab, where he lived a

peaceful and industrious life. A rich man, who lived near him, coveted his snug little property and, pretending to have a claim upon it, sued for its possession. By bribing the judge, the rich rogue gained the case, and poor Curro was driven from his homestead penniless and indignant.

This man, the doctor said, had the spirit of Robin Hood, so famous in English ballads. He took to the mountain forests as a robber. His first exploit was to stop a Turkish officer on the highway, from whom he took seven thousand piasters, a sum which represented the value of his vineyard. With ready wit he then drew a bill on the pasha for that amount, and told the Turk to go to Aleppo and collect it.

Of course, this jest did not make him other than a thief. Knowing this, and being a bold man, he formed a robber band and became their chief. Like Robin Hood, he often gave to the poor what he stole from the rich. Meeting a peasant one day with a basket of grapes on his head, he stopped the affrighted man and asked :

“Why do you carry that heavy basket? Have you no donkey?”

“No, my donkey died, and I have no money to buy another.”

“What do donkeys cost in your village?”

“Five hundred piasters.”

“Well, here is the money. Get a beast to do your work, and when I come this way again and find you with your basket on your head, I will cut it off.”

“That was a pretty sure way to make the peasant buy a donkey with the money. No donkey, no head! Ha, ha!” laughed Richard.

At another time, the doctor said, Curro met a man who had been a year in Aleppo working to earn money enough to get married. He had the amount of his earnings in his pocket, which Curro took from him. The poor fellow begged him not to keep it, saying: “If you do, I must go back to Aleppo and begin again.”

“What!” exclaimed the brigand, “can you get married with this money? Nonsense! Here

is something to make the sum respectable. I hate pauper weddings."

The peasant took the sum offered him by the genial robber, and went away rejoicing that he had met such a liberal thief.

At another time Curro met a bridal party on a lonely road between two villages. "I am Curro," he said; "give me your money."

"We have none. We are poor people," the affrighted party replied.

"Those gold coins on the bride's neck are good. Give them to me!" rejoined the robber.

"What!" exclaimed the bride, with scorn, "do you call yourself Curro?"

The robber laughed at this spirited appeal, and went away leaving the coins on the bride's neck.

Curro one day robbed a Jew of Aleppo of merchandise worth about one hundred and thirty-five dollars. The merchant reported his loss at about eight hundred dollars. Curro heard of his statement, and wrote to the pasha, saying: "My dear friend: The property I took

from the merchant was only worth one hundred and thirty-five dollars. I inclose an invoice and samples of the goods. I felt obliged to do this in the interests of honesty."

"Honesty! O, O! what an impudent jester Curro was! A thief writing about honesty! What a queer conscience the fellow had!" observed Ronald.

"I judge his conscience was what in algebra is called a minus quantity," Professor Benedict observed. "The poor fellow had never been taught to discriminate very clearly between right and wrong. Having been robbed himself, he foolishly believed that he might rob others without incurring much guilt. He ought to have known that the crime of one man cannot justify the sin of another."

"But," said the doctor, "Curro found at last that the way of the transgressor is hard, even in badly governed Syria. Although, like Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, he made himself a popular hero, yet he was betrayed at last by a miller in Aleppo, whom he believed to be his

friend. Having sought a lodging, as was his custom, at this man's house, he found himself surrounded by soldiers who had been secreted in the mill by his false-tongued host. He was arrested, tried, and, since no one charged him with murder, he was not executed, but sentenced to spend fifteen years in prison. A just sentence, no doubt; yet one cannot help feeling pity for this Oriental Robin Hood, because he was the victim of the unhappy circumstances which soured the milk of natural kindness in his heart, and transformed him from an honest peasant into a dishonest though good-natured robber."

This talk about Curro had been frequently interrupted by observations on what they saw in the streets as they proceeded. They were surprised to find so many manufactories of various kinds, and to see such beautiful woolen and cotton cloths, curiously striped and ornamented with gold and silver threads, as were produced from its more than four thousand looms. They noticed also that English mer-

chants had shops in its streets, that its more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, consisting of Turks, Greeks, Maronites, Armenians, Syrians, and Jews, seemed to be busy and generally prosperous. Yet it was a decaying city, more or less dirty. Its castle, its walls, and many of its old houses were sinking into ruin. While observing these marks of neglect, Ronald said :

“What a fine place this might be made !”

“Yes,” replied the professor ; “but the Turk never repairs, never improves his possessions. He might easily free this ancient city from the visitations of the plague which, as the doctor told us yesterday, strikes it almost every decade, and sweeps its thousands into the grave. But he does nothing to cleanse and drain it. Allah sends the plague, he thinks, and all he has to do is to submit to it as something ordained by an irresistible fate. But the Turks, though once brave and powerful, have almost run their race. Their best qualities have departed ; their vices only flourish, and it will not

be long before they will cease to be rulers, either in Europe or Asia."

"I wonder the people here don't fight them," said Richard, with sharpness. "It seems to me that their pluck is all gone. One of the consul's clerks told me a capital story yesterday about a Turkish *effendi* who, when on a journey from this city, encamped one night near a village. His servants went to a merry-making in the village, leaving him alone in his tent. About midnight a single robber lifted the flap of his tent, strided in, and said, 'Give me your money!' The Turk, afraid of the bold brigand, quietly gave him his purse. Then the fellow, looking among a stock of fire-arms, grasped a fine fowling-piece, and said, 'I must have this!'

"Cowering before the robber, the trembling Turk replied, 'Don't take that! I love to shoot birds, and shall not be able to get another gun so good as that. Don't take it! You will make me miserable if you do.'

"The robber laughed at this craven speech,

and, finding the gun was loaded, cast a look of scorn on the Turk, and replied, 'Coward! Your gun is loaded, and you did not dare to shoot me.' Thus saying, he took the gun and proudly went his way."

"That story is hard on the Turk," said Ronald, laughing, "and it helps to prove, what I have often heard lately, that the Turk must go."

"And so must we," added the doctor. "We've many little matters to see to to-night, if we mean to start to-morrow."

At this hint from the doctor our party turned toward the street on which they had lodged so comfortably, and finished their preparations for an early start on the following morning.

"Did you ever know an Oriental ready to move at an appointed hour?" asked the doctor, somewhat querulously, the next morning, when he found that neither Hassan nor his muleteer appeared at the time fixed on the night before.

"One who travels in Asia needs much patience," pleasantly replied the professor.

“Here comes Hassan the unready,” cried Ronald, half an hour later, when he descried the sheikh approaching, mounted on his camel, and armed with his lance.

A little more delay, and then the mules started ahead with the baggage and servants. Shortly after the sheikh moved off on his camel. After him rode the doctor, with Richard, on his lively pony, by his side. The professor and Ronald brought up the rear. Their friends at the consul’s office waved them adieus, and thus our party started on the road leading to the great river Euphrates.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WATER OF DESIRE.

OUR travelers did not find their ride very agreeable after leaving Aleppo. The wind was blowing sharply from the north, and was so piercingly cold that, though well provided with wraps, they were very uncomfortable. The boys' teeth fairly chattered. Had the road been good and dry they might have gained some warmth by rapid riding. But this was out of the question, since it was scarcely possible to ride fast across such a hilly country, and on a road covered as theirs was with loose stones. Nor was their riding greatly improved after reaching level ground, as they did not long after noon. Recent rains had almost flooded the plain, and they were glad to quit their saddles and rest awhile on reaching a wretched little village, named Jabul, standing

near the border of the desert which they were now approaching.

There was no khan in this filthy hamlet, and they were compelled to eat their lunch in a miserable little hut about eight or ten feet square. With food they were well provided, since the doctor, who, as you know, was a veteran traveler, had taken care to bring a plentiful supply of bread and cold chicken from Aleppo. But the hovel in which they had to eat was so extremely dirty that, had not their appetites been sharpened by the morning's journey, they would have been too much disgusted to eat. As usual Master Richard was forward to put his annoyances into words, saying, while trying to arrange one of the tattered cushions, which was the Oriental substitute for chairs:

“Faugh! This shanty isn't fit for a dog-kennel. It hasn't any floor, and this rotten bit of carpet, spread on the bare ground, is black with dirt. The wind drives madly through that hole in the wall which lets in the light, but has no window, and that bit of bagging hung

in the door-way flaps about like the sail of a boat. If this isn't roughing it, I don't know what is."

"Pshaw, Dick! don't be so fretful," responded Ronald, "but put your teeth into a bit of this nice chicken. This isn't a palace, to be sure, but it's better to be here than to sit out in the cold. And that hole lets in the air, and so prevents this room from stifling us with its many unsavory smells. And, if you will call that bit of bagging which hangs in the door-way a *portiere* curtain, and these old cushions divans, things won't look so bad to you. Any way, I think it's better to laugh and to eat one's luncheon than it is to growl and stay hungry."

"Pretty well put, Ronald," said the professor, laughing.

The doctor also laughed, and said: "Perhaps Richard will learn before he gets back to Boston that, as the proverb says, 'Half an egg is better than an empty shell.'"

Richard looked cross, but made no reply. The sight of the cold chicken then drew him

toward the lunch-basket, and the pleasure of eating soon lessened his foolish displeasure with the hut.

The luncheon disposed of, they began to prepare for a fresh start, so that they might reach their next halting-place before sunset, when a piercing scream caused them to start. The doctor snatched his fowling-piece from the corner where he had placed it, and, pushing aside the bit of bagging in the door-way, stepped outside, and was followed by his companions. There he saw a young girl running, in great fear, from a yard in which a flock of sheep was folded. Looking toward the yard he saw a hungry looking wolf prowling round the sheep-yard, as if seeking a way of entrance into it. Moved by the instinct of a hunter, the doctor crept round an intervening hut with his weapon lowered. Very soon he fired. The wolf howled, and fled, it being only wounded, but not killed. The noise of the shot-gun drew the *fellaheen* of the village from their huts. They seemed to regret that the wolf had escaped, because, as they told

the doctor, they were very much annoyed in cold weather by the wolves which came down from the mountains in search of prey.

Riding in advance of their attendants, and guided by Hassan on his camel, our party, after passing over a few miles of rough, stony road, or caravan-track, came to a perfectly level plain.

"This is fine!" exclaimed Richard, as they rode on to this stoneless plain, green with a light growth of grass. "Come, let us have a gallop."

"Take care," replied the doctor; "it is not quite safe to gallop here."

"Why not, sir?" asked the positive lad. "I see nothing but long lines of mole-tracks. They wont hinder us, will they?"

"No, the mole-tracks are not very troublesome to sure-footed horses; but the holes of the little jerboa may throw them. See, there's one of the little rodents now peeping out of his hole."

But before the doctor had ceased speaking,

the jerboa had withdrawn himself from view. Riding up to the place of his appearance, they saw that the holes of these animals were in clusters. A galloping horse crushing through them might easily stumble.

“These jerboas are curious little creatures. They belong to the opossum family,” said the professor, as the party rode on. “Their hind legs are remarkably long, altogether out of proportion to their fore ones.”

Carefully avoiding the numerous holes of these animals, they traversed the plain several miles until they arrived at a mound on the edge of the desert. Here they found a group of tents pitched so as to form a square. They belonged to the Hannady, a tribe of Arabs who were shepherds dwelling in tents, and having several flocks of sheep under their care.

The doctor drew his reins in front of the sheikh's tent, as also did his companions. Hassan explained to the sheikh the wish of his party to pitch their tents in his neighborhood for the night. A liberal *backsheesh* or gift made him

perfectly willing to entertain them as best he could. They dismounted, therefore, and tethered their horses. While waiting the arrival of their tents and baggage, they were invited by the sheikh to sit within the door of his tent, which, like most Arab tents, was made of dark cloth woven from the hair of goats or camels.

The boy surveyed the interior of the tent with eager interest. It was large and apparently comfortable, plentifully supplied with rugs and cushions. Empty wheat-bags were piled round the tent poles, and the pack-saddles of the camels were placed so as to be readily used as seats and lounging-places.

After sitting on these saddles awhile listening to the doctor's talk in Arabic with the sheikh, they heard voices and laughter from parties apparently behind a curtain of goat's hair which divided the tent into two parts. The boys looked surprised, and Ronald, turning toward the doctor, asked :

“Who has the sheikh got behind that curtain, doctor?”

“The women’s apartment, called the harem, is behind the curtain,” replied the doctor. “This part of the tent is for the sheikh and his sons. But I hear voices outside; I guess our baggage has arrived.”

Quitting the tent our party found that Hassan was giving directions to the servants and muleteers respecting the tent. He had already selected a suitable spot. Our boy travelers, who had never until that day seen an Arab tent, watched the proceedings of the men with curious eyes. It took but a short time to remove the tent covering and poles from the backs of the mules which had carried them. Three poles were then inserted in a row in holes dug with a crowbar. As their tent was a double one, a second line of posts was put in at a suitable distance from the first. The covering, made not of goat’s hair, but of cotton, was then stretched horizontally over the tops of the poles, and fastened very much as our umbrella-cloth is fitted to the stick. Loops were attached to the inside of the covering. Ropes

were fixed to these loops and fastened to pegs driven into the ground. It took considerable time to pitch this tent, but when it was done, and their baggage placed within its curtains, the boys went into it, and sitting upon camp-stools, with which it was furnished, looked round with expressions of satisfaction in their faces.

“Well,” said Richard, “I like this. It is ten thousand times better than the hut we had to eat lunch in to-day. I don’t wonder the Arabs like to live in tents.”

Ronald thought tent-life might be pleasant for a little while, but not for a life-time. “You know,” said he, “that though we enjoyed living in our tent the last time we were in the woods of Maine, we were mighty glad to get back to our home in Boston when the weather grew cool toward the fall.”

“That was so,” replied his brother; “yet these Arabs seem to like it, for they have stuck to it ever since the times of Ishmael, the father of their race.”

“Ronald, who was the first dweller in tents?” asked the professor.

Without pausing to reflect, the lad replied, “Why, Adam, I suppose. Didn’t men have to live in tents before they knew how to build houses?”

“But where did they get the cloth to cover them?”

“I suppose they covered them with the skins of beasts,” replied Ronald, and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he added, “Why, how stupid I am! The Bible says that ‘Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle.’ I see it now. Jabal lived in a tent because he was a shepherd, and had to move his flocks from place to place to find pasture, just as these Arabs do. Wasn’t that so, professor?”

“No doubt it was. The first houses of men must have been in caves; the next in huts and houses made of the branches of trees plastered with mud, or built with mud walls, such as we saw to-day. But shepherds in hot countries

naturally become nomads or wanderers from place to place. As you know, not all the Arabs are nomads. Some of their tribes dwell in cities; and in some periods of their history have been skillful, learned, and powerful. But the tribes which have lived in the desert of Arabia as breeders of horses, camels, sheep, and goats, have found life in tents better suited to their business, and their descendants prefer it to life in ceiled houses."

"But do not some tents cost as much as a rich man's fine house?" inquired Ronald. "I think I have read of such tents, somewhere."

"Certainly, it is possible to spend even a fortune on a tent and its fixings," replied the professor. "Powerful chiefs and princes have often spent much money on fine tents. History tells of a Persian king whose tent was called the 'golden house,' because it glittered within and without with gold, and is said to have cost the immense, almost fabulous, sum of ten millions of dollars. We shall see some tents in this desert much better than others,

but not one that will compare in any degree with that golden house of the rich Persian monarch."

Their cook and servants now interrupted this conversation by bringing in their supper. It consisted in part of the coffee and cold meats they had brought from Aleppo, and partly of Arab bread with the milk of camels. This milk was obtained from the sheikh. They relished it exceedingly. The doctor said it was very nourishing. Their ride and the desert air had given them appetites which the professor insisted were "fairly ravenous." After eating, they read the story of Hagar and Ishmael, and then prayed to Hagar's God. After this truly Christian service they wrapped themselves in warm rugs, laid themselves down on bits of carpet with cushions for pillows, and slept perhaps more sweetly than many whose couches were filled with eider-down and surrounded with costly and beautiful objects of art.

The night was cold, and the servants, not

being in so warm a tent as our travelers, were up early the next morning, making coffee and getting breakfast ready. After eating this meal, our travelers mounted their steeds and rode toward the great river Euphrates, near which they expected to encamp in the evening of that day.

They were now fairly in the desert, beyond the sandy plain in which the mole and jerboa burrowed, and on ground which was green as emerald, dotted with wild flowers, and smooth as a race-course. The air was fresh and invigorating. The very beasts seemed to enjoy it. The boys were in high spirits. They cantered their ponies over the ground, merrily laughing and shouting to one another. At noon, when they halted near an Arab camp to water their horses and to eat luncheon, they declared that they had enjoyed more fun that morning than at any time since leaving Boston.

Their afternoon ride, though still a delight, did not excite them so highly. They were a little wearied through being as yet unused to

much riding, and quietly trotted their ponies a little behind Hassan's camel.

Toward the middle of the afternoon they were startled by seeing Hassan pointing toward the south-east, and hearing him shout, "*Morad Sou! Morad Sou!*"

"What does he say, doctor?" asked the boys, riding close to that gentleman's side.

"He says *Morad Sou!* which signifies the water of Desire or of Longing. This is what the Arabs call the Euphrates, of which great river he has just caught a glimpse."

"I see it! I see it winding about away off in yonder valley," cried Ronald.

Looking eastward they all caught glimpses of the great river Euphrates winding between its green banks like a band of silver.

"That stream," said the doctor, "is sometimes called the noblest river in Asia."

A mile or two beyond the point from which they caught their first view of the Euphrates, they lighted upon a small Arab camp. As they rode toward it, they saw the sheikh standing in

the door of his tent, as if waiting for their approach. His aspect to the eyes of our boy travelers was that of a wild man ; they gazed with feelings of wonder mixed with fear at his swarthy sun-burnt face, his dark, deep-set piercing eyes, his long, black locks straggling from beneath his turban, and his restless movements as he conversed with Hassan. After a few minutes the latter beckoned them to approach the tent. The sheikh met them courteously enough, and invited them into his tent to await the coming up of their little caravan of attendants.

After their own tent was ready to receive them they gladly entered it, and found it a very agreeable relief, after their long ride in their saddles, to lie down upon their rugs and cushions. Richard, upon whom the sheikh's black eyes had riveted with a snake-like fascination, had scarcely put himself into a restful position before he exclaimed :

“Ronnie! did you ever see such a wicked looking eye as that old sheikh has in his head? It positively made me shiver to look at him; he

actually made me think that he might be one of the forty thieves we read about in the 'Arabian Nights.'"

Ronald laughed at the last supposition and replied: "I didn't think of the forty thieves when I looked into those eyes, which seemed to look right through a fellow; but I did think of that verse we read in our tent last night which told us that the angel said of Ishmael, 'He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.' There is such a wild look about that Arab, that I shouldn't like to meet him alone out in the desert."

"Perhaps it would not be quite safe to meet him thus, particularly if he thought you had money or jewels in your pockets," said the doctor, laughing; "but you need not be afraid that he will disturb us. Like most Arabs he may be a thief at heart, but we have made peace with him through Hassan, who is of his tribe. His face is not as pleasant as it might be. Hassan told me that he was robbed of a favorite camel

a few nights since by some Arabs of another tribe, and that he is still smarting under his loss. Probably that made him look so very much like a wild man to-day. But his race is wild and restless, as the angel prophesied to Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, it would be. Find the Arab where you may, whether in Africa; in the desert of Sinai, known as Rocky Arabia; in Arabia Felix, which poets call Arabia the Blest, or in Arabia Deserta, in the northern part of which we now are, and you will find him, as far as he dares to be, a wild man with an armed hand ready to strike all but his own tribe; and not a man in whom it is safe to place implicit confidence."

The entrance of their attendants with their supper put a sudden end to this conversation. The eagerness of their appetites inspired them for the moment with more interest in the breast of a roasted bird than in an army of Arabs.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE BANKS OF THE EUPHRATES.

THE sheikh, near whose camp our party had pitched their tent, showed them unexpected hospitality the next morning, when he invited them to a repast in his tent. They found him and his two sons, with three boys, his grandsons, between six and twelve years old, making preparation for the morning meal. His tawny face was no longer wild as when they first saw him standing at the door of his tent, but calm and even placid, as befitted even a chief about to act the part of an hospitable host to a party of strangers from a far-off land. As they learned afterward some of his men had recovered the stolen camel, and this good luck had made him cheerful. When they passed within the door or curtain of his tent he rose from the carpet, whereon he sat, to give them a friendly greeting.

Placing his hand upon his heart, and bowing, he said in Arabic, "Good-day!" Had they been strangers of his own race and religion he would have said, "*Salam aleikum*," or "Peace be with you." To this the person saluted would have replied, "*Aleikum effalam*," or "With you be peace!" But seeing they were foreigners, and not Mohammedans, he only, as was the Arab custom in such cases, wished them a good-day.

Seating themselves on the carpet, our travelers looked with curious interest on what was going forward. Seeing smoke issuing from the top of the curtain which hung in front of the harem, hearing the chatter and titter of female voices behind it, and smelling the odor of boiling meat, they concluded that the wives of the sheikh and his sons were cooking breakfast. The sheikh also busied himself pounding coffee in a mortar, which, the doctor informed the boys, in answer to their inquiries, was the Arab fashion.

"But why don't they grind it?" asked

Ronald. "Couldn't they buy coffee-mills in Aleppo?"

"Most likely they could, but they prefer pounding the berry. And some European travelers—Niebuhr among them—after drinking coffee prepared both ways, have thought it more aromatic and refreshing when macerated in a mortar than when ground in a mill, after our custom."

Our Boston boys watched the actions of the three young Arabs, who, in their turn, were casting furtive glances at them. Not knowing Arabic, they could not speak to one another. What they thought of the grave little Arabs we shall, perhaps, learn hereafter.

When the food was brought in Ronald and Richard were more puzzled than pleased. It was boiled mutton, chopped into shapeless bits of various sizes, and served up on a very large wooden platter, which was placed, not on a table, of which the tent was destitute, but on the carpet near the spot where the sheikh and his guests sat. Cakes of half-baked bread studded

the edge of the dish which held the meat. Before giving the sign to begin eating, the sheikh, who was a very devout Mohammedan, rose up, bowed his head, and said, not without seriousness, "In the name of the most merciful God !"

This was his "grace before meat." It was no sooner said than, after pushing up his flowing sleeves, and sitting down, he leaned toward the smoking dish, and taking a lump of the greasy, unsavory mutton from the dish with his fingers, began eating voraciously. The doctor told the boys and his brother that they were expected to follow his example. It was not their way of eating, and the boys hesitated until, seeing their tutor and the doctor doing their best to comply with Arab customs, they picked out as dainty a bit of the meat and as fair a cake of bread as they could see, and began eating, but not before Richard had said :

"Well, I s'pose we must try, because, as the proverb says, 'When one is in Rome one must do as Rome does.'"

The mutton was tough, unsalted, and un-

savory. The bread was made of millet mixed with camel's milk and oil. It was little else than dough, slightly browned on the bottom, but not half-cooked through. The sheikh and his sons, with their boys, devoured it in hot haste, as the Arabs of the desert are wont to do, and, fortunately, before our travelers, after much effort to overcome their disgust, had made out to swallow their first mouthful, the dish was empty. Then the Arabs rose to their feet. The sheikh bowed and said, "God be praised!" Water was next passed round, and then a small cup of coffee, without milk or sugar, was handed to each one present.

"Bah!" exclaimed Richard, as soon as he found himself with his friends inside their own tent. "That breakfast was scarcely fit to give a tramp! It makes me sick to think of those Arabs dipping their fingers into the dish they expected us to eat from. I couldn't eat either the mutton or the dough, though I was as hungry as a hunter."

The doctor laughed, but comforted the crest-

fallen lads by telling them that they had learned a lesson about the habits of a Bedouin of the desert in such a way that it would stick to them as long as they lived. And he added: "Knowing what to expect, before accepting the sheikh's invitation, I had ordered our own cook to provide us a breakfast, which we will now proceed to eat."

After refreshing themselves from their own stores our travelers, leaving their servants to strike the tent and follow with the baggage, mounted their horses and started for the banks of the Euphrates.

As they rode leisurely over the smooth soil of the desert, Ronald, who was next the doctor, after some remarks about the sheikh's tent, exclaimed: "What sober-faced fellows those little Arab boys are! They look as if they hadn't any fun in them, as American boys of their age have. They are boy-men."

"That's because they are taught to act like men while they are as yet but little children," replied the professor. "Niebuhr says, 'the

Arabs are never children,' by which he means that, although they lead a frolicsome life in the harem with the women until they are five or six years old, yet at that tender age they are taken from the care of their mothers and made to pass their days in the company of their fathers. Hence, hearing nothing but men's talk about camels, horses, and other affairs of the camp and tribe, they soon lose the lively spirits of children and become pensive, if not sad, in appearance, though perhaps not in reality, because Arabs are vivacious after a fashion of their own."

"But don't they have any sports?" asked Richard.

"Not among these northern tribes, who regard music and dancing as highly improper. The girls are not allowed to meet with the boys. The games of American boys are unknown among them; hence they know nothing of the sports of our country. But among the more southern tribes and in cities Arab boys sometimes leap and dance, with arms in their hands, to the beating of small drums. Yet, in the main,

all Arab boys become men in their feelings, looks, and actions, while they ought to be either in the nursery or at school."

"Poor fellows!" exclaimed Ronald. "I'm glad I wasn't born in Arabia."

"That is, indeed, a very proper feeling," replied Professor Benedict. "Yet there is one Arab virtue which even a Boston boy may properly emulate."

"What is that, sir?" inquired both lads, speaking simultaneously.

"Temperance," replied their tutor, "Arabs do not touch strong drink."

"Neither do we, sir; we are teetotalers, you know," rejoined Ronald.

"Yes, I know; and I believe you are true boys who will never break that important pledge. Though you are not Arabs, yet in that virtue you will, I trust, always resemble them. But their virtue is shaded by a vice. They smoke *hasheesh*, made from a species of hemp. It excites them very highly, and sometimes inclines them to fight."

This conversation was broken off by their arrival at the edge of the plain from which they obtained their first full view of the beautiful vale through which the Euphrates flows. The plain terminated in a rocky ledge which was about one hundred and fifty feet above the level of the river. As our travelers looked down upon the broad valley which stretched away some five miles to a corresponding ledge of rocks on the opposite side, they were filled with delight at the unexpected loveliness of the scene. The grass of the meadow, through which the winding river flowed like a band of molten silver, was green as emerald. Willows, date-trees, tamarisks, fringed its banks at intervals. Numerous flocks of sheep were quietly grazing, guarded by their Arab shepherds, whose tents dotted the landscape, beneath the high banks which inclose the valley. And, as if intended to prevent the scene from being monotonous, the lacquered dome of a mosque rose here and there above the clumps of the willows, as did also the broken pillars still standing among the ruins of

buildings erected in the ancient days when the valley was crowded with inhabitants.

“Well!” exclaimed Richard. “I don’t believe that one of our Boston High School boys ever dreamed that such a glorious sight as this could be found in Arabia. Do you, Ronald?”

“Not they, indeed! Our fellows all laughed at me when I told them I was going to Arabia. Some of them were impolite enough to suggest that none but fools would expect to find any thing beautiful in the Arabian desert. They thought it contained nothing but sand and robbers. But here is a something quite as lovely as any thing we have in America.”

Our travelers, after slowly descending the ravine to the foot of the ledge, found themselves not far from the stream, which, by means of a sudden bend in its bed at this point, which is named Belis, flowed quite close to its wall of rocks. Here the great river appeared to be about twelve hundred feet wide and deep enough to be navigated by large vessels. As

they halted awhile near its shore, the professor turned to his pupils, and said :

“Let me test you in your geography a little, young gentlemen. How far is it from Belis, where we now are, to the Persian Gulf, into which this noble stream empties its waters?”

“That is scarcely a fair question, sir,” replied Ronald, with a smile ; “because Belis is such an unimportant place that one would scarcely think of making it a point from which to measure the length of a river.”

“Your objection is very well taken, Master Ronald, though Belis has been named as the probable future landing-place for steam-ships. It is a thousand miles from this spot to the mouth of this historic stream. But can you tell the entire length of the Euphrates?”

“I think it is about one thousand four hundred miles, sir,” replied Richard.

Ronald’s apparent hesitation had led his brother to give this answer. But he now said : “You are right, Dick, and it rises in Armenia, not very far from Lake Van ; works its way,

with many bends and turns, through the mountains of Taurus and Anti-Taurus, until, after many a leap, by which it forms splendid cataracts, it finds its way into this noble valley, passes through *Arabia Deserta*, weds itself to the Tigris, and finally finishes its course as a river in the Persian Gulf."

"Pretty well put, Master Ronald; but what is that?"

The sharp report of a fowling-piece, which was repeated in decided echoes from the rocky cliff, had caused the professor's sudden start and question. Looking in the direction of the sound, a little puff of smoke directed their attention to the doctor, who, attracted by the sight of a bird, had quietly moved away toward a clump of trees. They soon saw him coming toward them, holding a dead woodcock in his hand, the trophy of his skill as a sportsman.

The boys who, though bred in the city of Boston, had acquired no mean acquaintance with the arts of the hunter and sportsman by spending two summers in the forests of Maine,

were delighted at this evidence of the presence of game in the jungles of the Euphrates. And when the doctor told them that woodcocks, rock-pigeons, and a species of pheasant called francolins were numerous, Richard turned toward his brother, and exclaimed :

“That’s good news ! We shall get some fun out of our ride down this valley. I’ll get my gun out presently, when the fellows overtake us with our baggage.”

“And what will be better than the fun, Dick, will be the game-suppers we shall get out of our hunting,” added Ronald, in gleeful anticipation of eating some nicely cooked birds in their tent in the evening.

Guided by Hassan, they now rode down the valley to the neighborhood of a group of huts occupied by some poor Arabs, where they were to bivouac for luncheon. While awaiting the arrival of their baggage the boys proposed to accompany the doctor into a thick jungle of tamarisks in search of game. Learning their purpose from the doctor, Hassan cautioned them

not to venture far into the woods without their guns, because of the lions, which sometimes made their lairs in the jungle.

“Lions!” exclaimed Ronald. “What! are we near the dens of those lords of the forest?”

The doctor said those beasts were certainly in the neighborhood, but were not likely to appear in the day-time, though when driven by hunger they had been known to attack and devour a stray mule or to seize an unprotected child by daylight. He thought it best, therefore, for the boys to keep out of the jungle until their guns arrived. As for himself, he was not apprehensive, and would go alone, hoping to bag game enough for their luncheon.

“I agree to that, sir,” said Ronald, laughing; “because I very much prefer eating some of the woodcock you may shoot, to being myself eaten by a hungry lion.”

Dr. Benedict found the birds very numerous, and returned in less than an hour with woodcocks and pigeons sufficient for what Richard inelegantly said would be “a good square meal.”

These were given to their cook to keep for their supper that evening. For luncheon that worthy furnished them with bread and cold mutton, with some buffalo's milk which he purchased from a party of Arabs encamped near the spot of their noontide bivouac.

After luncheon they spent some time in rambling about, and seeking the best points from which to view the various objects which studded the valley. While thus engaged Ronald turned to the professor, and asked :

“Is that a big wheel I see yonder rising out of the water?”

“Most likely it is one of the old water-wheels with which the Arabs, who make their homes here, irrigate their fields in the summer season. Let us go and examine it.”

Following their tutor, the boys passed through a broad opening in the jungle to the river's edge. There they found a half-ruined aqueduct supported on Gothic arches. Beyond the aqueduct they saw walls with parapets built out into the stream sufficiently far to direct its current

toward a huge wheel at the end of the aqueduct.

"What a clumsy old wheel that is!" exclaimed Richard. "I'm sure no Yankee would make such a bungling affair as that."

"I guess not," replied Ronald; "but what are those red things fastened to its arms? Let us go and see, Dick."

"Be careful, boys," said the professor, as the lads started away. "My opinion is that this ancient aqueduct is in too crumbling a condition to be walked on."

"We'll try it any how," retorted Richard.

The professor's opinion proved to be correct, as the boys found when, after moving a short distance, they fell into a heap of bricks which gave away beneath their feet.

"Let us get out of this tumble-down concern as quick as we can," said Richard, looking up with a very wry face as he rubbed his bruised shins.

Ronald, who also found his footsteps somewhat uncertain, quickly and laughingly replied:

“I agree to that; though if I had been here five hundred years ago, I think I could have walked out to that wheel without a fall. It was strong enough then to bear an elephant, I should say, from the look of it. Poor old aqueduct! Like this valley, it has seen its best days.”

Returning to the spot where the professor stood patiently waiting their return, Ronald said: “You were correct, sir, and we came near getting a bad tumble. The aqueduct is crumbling into ruins. It could not stand such heavy weights as we are.”

“It is just as well, boys. My field-glass answers your question about those red things on the wheel. They are earthen vessels, with which the water is raised to the mouth of the aqueduct when the current turns the wheel—but the doctor is calling us. Let us hurry up and begin our afternoon journey.”

CHAPTER VI.

JOINING AN ARAB CAMP.

RESUMING their journey, after their noon rest, they rode at a moderate pace along the caravan road, which, in some places, owing to the near approach of the winding river to its wall of rocks, ran here and there up ravines, to the plain and down again to the valley below. These occasional ascents led them to notice certain signs of the former existence of cities near the edge of the desert, and Professor Benedict remarked :

“ From what we can see of the valley, and of these fragments of ancient buildings above it, I incline to think that when this region was filled with inhabitants, the valley was devoted to agriculture, and its cities stood on this high ground.

The professor was probably correct in this

opinion, though, from the ruinous towers visible on the river banks, the doctor surmised that fortified posts once stood in the vale, and that villages for husbandmen were scattered here and there along the lowlands. Talking of these matters they rode leisurely along until, toward evening, they stopped for the night close to a group of mud-walled huts occupied by a number of Arab families belonging to an inferior tribe, and following the business of shepherds. As soon as their tent was pitched, and their food prepared, they sat down to eat supper.

“This is what I call good eating!” exclaimed Richard, after picking the bones of a woodcock clean.

“So say I,” added Ronald. “This supper is equal to any thing a fellow could expect to find on the table of the Hotel Brunswick, in Boston.”

“Yes; the doctor’s game-bag has done us good service to-day, though I surmise that we are somewhat indebted to the cool air, and to

our day's ride, for our appetites," observed the professor.

"That's so," replied Richard ; "but don't we owe something to our cook, also? I don't see how the fellow made out to cook this nice supper with no kitchen except his little tent, and his fire on the ground; but who is this peeping into our tent?"

The question called the attention of the party to a turbaned head which appeared at the tent-door. The doctor rose at once from his camp-stool, and held a conversation with the stranger.

"He is a snake-charmer," said the doctor, after a brief conversation with the dark-faced Arab. "He wants to give us a specimen of his skill."

"O, do let him!" exclaimed Richard.

Ronald expressed the same wish. The doctor invited the man into the tent. Having called his son, a bright-looking boy, not more than eight years old, the Arab entered the tent bearing a bag which held a number of venomous snakes. Hassan, with the sheikh of the

village, the cook, and the attendants of our party, gathered about the entrance of the tent to witness the performance.

Opening the mouth of his bag, the Arab pulled out a number of snakes which had twisted themselves into a tight knot.

"Their bite is deadly," said Hassan, in reply to a question asked by the doctor.

Being told this, the boys felt a thrill of terror when they saw the little snake-charmer take the venomous creatures from his father's hands, place them in his naked bosom, and suffer them to twine about his neck and arms. Hassan and the other Arabs gazed on the spectacle with wonder and fear. Presently one of the snakes bit the boy. The blood flowed. Then the boy's father, pretending to be very angry, seized the offending snake, bit off its head, and dashed its writhing body into the midst of the Arab group at the tent-door.

Then Hassan and the other sheikh cursed the snake-charmer in fearful language, declaring that he was in league with the spirit of evil.

Thinking that the spectators might be in doubt as to the really deadly nature of his snakes, the fellow offered to repeat his disgusting act with any snake that they might bring him. But the doctor, handing him a gift, dismissed him, saying :

“That will do! that will do! Good-day to you!”

The man and his boy left the tent with many thanks for the doctor’s liberal *backsheesh*. Replying to Ronald’s inquiry, whether the snakes were poisonous or not, Doctor Benedict said :

“They are venomous by nature, no doubt, but he had most likely rendered them harmless by drawing their teeth.”

“Yet he offered to repeat his trick with any snake brought to him,” objected Ronald.

“True, my dear boy, but that was mere bravado. It was a very safe offer. He was quite sure that none would be brought to him.”

Our boy travelers slept the sound sleep of healthful weariness that night in their comfortable tent. They were awaked early next morn-

ing by the doctor, for the purpose of trying their skill as sportsmen in a jungle or forest of tamarisk-trees, which was at no great distance from the huts of the Arabs. Taking their guns and one of their attendants, to whom the doctor handed a rifle to carry, lest, as he said, they might meet with a lion, a wild boar, or a wolf, they soon entered the jungle. The boys were surprised to hear the noisy chattering of magpies, the loud cawing of rooks, the rolling note of the blackbird, the trill of the nightingale, the whir of the pheasant, and once, when near a dense thicket, the whine of a jackal. Game was plenty and by no means timid. They were good marksmen, and soon filled their bags with woodcocks, pigeons, francolins, and ducks. They enjoyed the sport exceedingly, albeit Ronald was a little nervous lest a lion should happen to cross their path. Once, when a gust of wind moaned through the jungle, he exclaimed :

“Hark, doctor, wasn’t that the roar of a lion?”

“Not exactly,” said the doctor, smiling at his

needless fear. "It was the voice of the wind you heard. As I told you once before, the lions of the Euphrates are not very dangerous. With my good rifle I should not fear meeting one of them. Lady Blunt, in her book of travels in this valley, tells of an Arab, however, who one evening shot at one with his pistol for mere amusement. The creature growled and scampered away. The man rode on a little behind the rest of the party. Toward dusk his companions heard a shriek, and then missed this man, whose name was Bozan. Afraid to search for him in the gathering gloom, they galloped away. The next morning they found his mangled body about fifty yards within the jungle. Had he let the lion alone, it is probable that the creature would not have followed him."

"Well," replied Ronald, "if lions hereabouts are not very savage, yet the fate of Bozan teaches us that it wont do to trifle with them."

After traveling without any marked adventure some four or five days, they arrived at a considerable Arab village, named Deyr, where

they spent a quiet Sabbath, mostly in their tents, in which they very properly held a religious service, at which the professor read those interesting portions of Scripture which relate to the great nations that anciently flourished near the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

“I wonder whether we are near the river of Chebar where, as you just read, Ezekiel found the captive Jews whom King Shalmaneser carried away from Samaria?”

To this inquiry by Ronald the professor replied: “Yes; some twenty or twenty-five miles farther down the river, the Khabour empties its waters into the Euphrates. The Khabour of to-day is the Chebar of Ezekiel and the Habor of the author of the Book of Kings. It was there that the prophet says, ‘As I was among the captives the heavens opened, and I saw visions of God.’”

“It makes me feel strangely,” said Richard, “when I think that I am so near the spot where, in those ancient times, the people of Israel were held in bondage by a heathen king,

and where Ezekiel had those wonderful visions, some of which you read to us to-day. Shall we visit it on our way to Bagdad?"

"Not if we follow our plan of joining an Arab encampment," replied the doctor. "There is nothing remarkable about the place now except its natural beauty. In the times of the captivity it was covered with towns and villages. A large population no doubt dwelt on its banks, and on the neighboring plain. Numerous ancient ruins of Assyrian structures prove that; but now it is chiefly remarkable for its fertile pastures and 'flowery meads.' Mr. Layard says: 'From its mouth to its source, from Carchemish to Ras-al-Ain, there is now no single permanent human habitation on the Khabour.'"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ronald. "Has it no inhabitants?"

"Only wandering Arabs, who make the valley their summer pasturing ground," replied the doctor. "They regard it as a paradise, because, unlike their treeless deserts, its wooded banks,

its emerald greensward, its rich crops of grass, and its abundant tender herbs afford food for their camels and sheep, and cool shades in which to pitch their tents at a time when their deserts are yellow and parched."

"I remember," added the professor, "that Mr. Layard was delighted with its scenery. Standing on a mound, from which he finally extracted some curious remains of Assyrian art, his eye ranged over a level country bright with flowers and spotted with black Arab tents and innumerable flocks of sheep and camels. During his stay, while his men were working at the mound, he noticed that the plain, which stretches beyond the valley, was undergoing a continual change. First it was golden yellow; then a new family of flowers appeared and changed it to a bright scarlet, after which it became a deep blue. Around this spot, he wrote, may have been pitched the tents of the sorrowing Jews as these of the Arabs are now. To the same pastures they led their sheep, and they drank of the same waters."

“Then Mr. Layard had no doubt that the captive Jews lived there, as the Bible teaches,” observed the thoughtful Ronald.

“Not the least. He had found too many proofs of the truth of Scripture story, written and carved in stone, in all the vast regions over which the proud Assyrian once reigned to permit a doubt of the exact truth of Bible history. Besides the stone records which he and others like him dug from the ruins of Assyrian and Babylonian cities he found in the writings of uninspired historians such other evidences of the presence of Jews on the Khabour that he said, ‘We *know* that Jews still lingered in the cities of the Khabour until long after the Arabs invaded that country. That is, the thing is historically certain.’ He also says that Benjamin of Tudela, who visited it in the latter end of the twelfth century, found families among its people who claimed to be descendants of those captive Jews whom King Shalmaneser carried away from Samaria centuries before. God has set his seal on the Bible, and bad men cannot



Hassan on the Look-out.

prove it unworthy of the faith of the world. But, as we may have a long ride to-morrow, we had better finish our talk on these interesting questions at some future time."

The next morning Hassan informed our travelers that an Anezeh tribe, recently engaged in a foray against some hostile tribes, was in the desert not far away. As it was their wish to travel awhile with the genuine men of the desert, they left the caravan route to Bagdad, and pushed out at once into the desert in search of this Anezeh tribe.

After riding two or three hours Ronald and Richard, who were cantering a few rods ahead of their party, though careful to glance backward now and then lest they should get astray, suddenly reined in their little steeds, and gazed with strained eyes upon several objects moving apparently toward them in the distance. After a few moments Ronald asked his brother, with some alarm :

"What do you see, Dick?"

"Men on horseback, I think," replied his

brother, "though they are so little I can't exactly make out what they are."

"Yes, I see," replied Ronald, after a searching glance in the direction toward which his brother was pointing. "They are growing larger every moment. I guess they are some wild Arabs out on the raiding expedition Hassan told us of. There are one, two, three, four—yes, six of them, I declare!"

"We had better go back to our folks. Perhaps our sheikh can tell us whether they are his friends or not," said Richard.

Turning their ponies about, they saw Hassan in the act of driving his camel ahead of their party, which had by this time come to a standstill. The doctor and professor were in close consultation. The servants and muleteers were also talking earnestly together. Seeing these signs of either interest or alarm, the brothers rode close up to their tutor, and Ronald asked, somewhat nervously :

"Do you think those fellows who are coming this way will attack us, professor?"

"Probably not," replied Dr. Benedict. "Hassan thinks they are Anezehs. See! he is getting near them. He is brandishing his spear like a warrior defying an enemy. Can't you see his movement?"

Yes, they could see it, but could not understand what it indicated until the doctor, who had been looking through his field-glass, observed: "They are friendly Arabs. Hassan has joined them, and is coming back in their company. Let us go to meet them."

"Hadn't we better get our revolvers ready, though?" asked Richard, whose courage was usually greater than his wisdom.

"By no means," replied the doctor. "If they are friendly, as I doubt not they are, we shall not need revolvers. If they are enemies, it will be madness for us to fight them. It is not their custom to kill travelers who do not resist them by force. At the worst, they will only rob us if we do not fight them."

In a short time the advancing horsemen, with Hassan in their company, came near enough

for the latter to tell the doctor that the strangers belonged to his tribe, and were the vanguard of a large encampment which was returning from a raid and moving toward fresh pasturing ground. "If," said he, "we keep a little more to the north we can let them pass without getting mixed up with them. When they stop to rest, as they soon will, we can join them, if their sheikh will permit."

As our party had never yet seen a large body of Arabs on the march, the boys were delighted with the prospect of seeing the one now approaching. Parting company with the armed Arab horsemen, one of whom rode back, probably to tell their friends who our travelers were, our party rode a little to the north of their intended course for a mile or two, when they saw slowly coming into view a long line of Arabs, armed with spears and sabers, and mounted, some on horses and some on camels. They were perhaps a hundred paces apart, and their line stretched along the desert for more than two miles. Just behind them were hundreds of

she-camels, with their young ones, moving in ranks widely separated from each other, and browsing as they marched upon the wild herbage at their feet.

After these came many camels laden with the tents and provisions of the tribe. Next in order were the women and children, also mounted on camels and seated in cradle-shaped saddles, surmounted with curtains to protect them from the sun. Scattered among all these camels were horsemen, some of whom led horses, without riders, by their halters. Behind all, and at a considerable distance, was a large flock of sheep and goats, driven by a few shepherds on foot.

“Well,” remarked Ronald, when this long Arab array had passed, “I never saw such a procession as that before. If Barnum could get it to America he would beat himself. His ‘greatest show on earth’ would be beaten out of sight by this immense cavalcade.”

After resuming their march in the rear of the Arabs, Richard rode to the doctor’s side,

and asked him: "Why did Hassan flourish his lance when he met the first horsemen we saw?"

"He did that to show the pride he takes in the honor of his tribe," replied the doctor. "It was his act of defiance in case the horsemen should prove to be enemies. Had you been near him you would have heard him say, as he did it, 'I am an Anezeh! I am an Anezeh!' By Arab law this act and speech would have justified the strangers, had they been enemies, in treating him with all the rigors of war. If, instead of flourishing, he had laid down his lance, his life would have been safe, but his reputation for courage would have been lost. Even his own people would have treated him with contempt to the day of his death. But as they proved to be friends, his defiant act saved both his reputation and his property."

"Don't you think he knew them to be friends, doctor?" asked Richard; "and wasn't his courage put on for effect?"

“It may be so, my boy,” replied the doctor, laughing. “We know he expected to meet friends, and his boldness may have grown out of that expectation. But let us be charitable. Hassan seems to be a plucky fellow, and we will take him at his own price until we are sure he is a counterfeit.”

The Arabs soon arrived at one of the wells of the desert. Guided by Hassan, the doctor went to see their sheikh, from whom he obtained permission to travel awhile with his tribe, which, after leaving its sheep with some shepherds at Deyr, was to travel southward to spend the remainder of the winter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHIPS OF THE DESERT.

THE Arabs pitched their numerous tents in a valley-like depression of the plain, which afforded some protection against the wind, and, what was still more important, pasturage for their camels. Their sheikh, Mahmoud, received the doctor very graciously, conversed very freely with him, offered him coffee and dates, and gave him permission to travel with his people as long as he pleased. So satisfied was the doctor with his manner and hospitality that he presented him with a valuable cloak. On joining his brother and the boys, he said :

“Mahmoud is a venerable old gentleman, polite as a Frenchman, and as hearty in his hospitality as an Englishman is to a welcome guest. He wishes to see you all in his tent as soon as you are rested.”



Dromedary.

An abundant supply of camel's milk, rice, butter, bread, and dates, sent to their tent by the sheikh, enabled their cook, who was already well supplied with game, to provide a refreshing luncheon. A heavy rain compelled them to remain in their tent through the afternoon. The next morning being clear and cool, the boys sauntered out to survey the Arab encampment, which was divided into separate groups of tents and stretched for a mile or two along the wady. In the widest parts they saw their camels grazing on chamomile, wild oats, barley, rye, and various species of grass; their horses were tethered in the vicinity of the tents, in and around which the men were lolling about in the full enjoyment of that indolence which is so agreeable to those desert wanderers, as it is also to all natives of Oriental countries. The women, however, were not idle, but busy gathering woody shrubs for their fires, grinding grain, preparing food, and milking the goats and camels.

“Those Arabs are lazy fellows, they look like

a lot of loafers, while their women are busy as bees."

This was Ronald's indignant remark to the professor, on his return to their tent. That gentleman, in reply, said :

"Yes; like our Indians, these nomadic Arabs do the hunting and fighting, but require their women to do all the work of their encampments."

The objects which most moved the curiosities of the boys during the day were the camels. The young of these ungainly creatures especially excited their mirth. When they first saw one of them Ronald laughed aloud and exclaimed :

"See, Dick, that baby camel is all neck and legs, and no body! Look at its big eyes! They stick out like the bulls' eyes in a ship. Did you ever see such a queer creature?"

Richard confessed that he had not. Then his brother, turning to the doctor, asked :

"Why do these Arabs keep so many camels? They don't make them work, except those which carry burdens when they move to new pasture

ground. What do they do with them, Dr. Benedict ? ”

“ They drink their milk as food and raise them for sale, Ronald. The tribes in the more southerly part of this vast desert breed them in much greater numbers than is done so far north as this.”

“ But who buys them, doctor ? ” queried Richard, in the tone of one to whom a statement seems incredible.

“ The Turkomans, the Kurds, and sometimes the Egyptian government, buy them. They are excellent beasts of burden. To an army moving through a sparsely settled country, poorly supplied with water and with no solid highways, they are indispensable as carriers of baggage and ammunition. They have been called the “ ships of the desert,” which could not be traversed without them. The great caravans of commerce and hosts of pilgrims, which annually traverse these deserts from Mohammedan countries to Mecca, also keep up a perpetual demand for these useful creatures.”

"I have read somewhere," said Ronald, "that camels carry so much water in their stomach that they can travel for days, or even weeks, without drinking. Is that a fact, doctor?"

Before the doctor had time to reply Richard added: "And I have heard that when travelers can't find water in the desert they sometimes kill their camels and drink the water that is in their stomachs to save their own lives. Can that be true, sir?"

The doctor laughed as he replied, after the manner of a genuine Yankee, by asking: "If you found yourself nearly frozen with cold and had nothing with which to make a fire, would you burn your house?"

"Not unless I wanted to freeze to death, as I should be sure to do after the house was burned up," rejoined Richard.

"For a similar reason no Arab would kill his camel to quench his thirst. To kill his camel would be throwing away his last chance of reaching a well or an encampment of his friends. But it is not true that camels do

carry water in their stomachs for more than a few hours after drinking. They can, however, endure thirst much longer than horses. If reared in a region well supplied with water they must drink every other day in summer time. If driven a third day without water they are apt to sink. But camels raised in hot and dry parts of the desert will travel four days without drinking ; after that they would be greatly distressed and most probably die."

"I recollect," added the professor, "that Mr. Burckhardt speaks of seeing many camels slaughtered, but saw no water in their stomachs unless they had drank a few hours before."

"He does," remarked the doctor, "and he also states that the African camel, raised in Darfur, can endure thirst longer than the Arabian. Caravans from that country to Egypt are often nine or ten days without water, but many of the poor camels die on the road, and all of them suffer terrible distress. No Arabian camel could survive such a journey."

After this talk about camels Richard obtained

permission from the sheikh to mount one, and, in company with Hassan, to take a short ride in the neighborhood of the camp. The animal he rode was small and quick of step. After the lad had taken his seat and the creature had risen to its feet, the sheikh said to the doctor :

“That creature’s back is so soft that you may drink a cup of coffee while you ride upon him.”

This was the usual compliment paid by an Arab to his trained riding camel. The doctor translated it for Richard’s benefit. The boy laughed, and replied : “I’ll tell you how true that is when I come back.”

Hassan led the way, not putting his beast into either a gallop or a trot, but into that ambling gait which is most natural to the camel, and which, on his return, Richard declared was very easy and pleasant. After dismounting, he asked :

“How far do you suppose I have ridden, doctor?”

Taking out his watch Mr. Benedict replied :

“You have been gone about half an hour, and

have probably covered a distance of two miles and a half. Five miles an hour is the average rate at which such camels travel when left to their own choice."

"Do you think those big, heavy fellows yonder travel as fast as that, sir?" asked Ronald, pointing to some burden-bearing camels grazing near by.

"There are camels and *camels*," replied the doctor, smiling. "Camels differ as much as horses. Some are like our heavily-built coach-horses; others are more like our race-horses. The small, light ones are often called dromedaries or *delouls*. The one Richard has been riding is a *deloul*. It takes a caravan composed mostly of the burden-carrying camels twenty-five days to travel from Aleppo to Bagdad, while special messengers, on camels of the best breed, will cover the same distance in about seven days."

"It is a pity the camel is such a homely beast," said Ronald. "Its hump is any thing but beautiful."

"Yet the hump is a point in his camel to which the Arab pays great attention," replied the professor.

The boys laughed outright at him, and then one of them said : " Well, I can't imagine what there is in a camel's hump to look at unless it be to make one wish there was some way of removing it."

" Yet," replied the professor, " the Arabs, when starting on a journey, will look on their camels and say, if the humps are fat, ' Our camels will stand the journey. They will feed on the fat of their humps.' They know that so long as the hump retains its fat the camel will bear great fatigue on very little food. While traveling, the lump grows smaller unless the animal is well fed, and when it is overworked the hump shrinks into very small proportions, and then if it be obliged to travel farther, its body is soon reduced into a mere skeleton. Plenty of food, with rest, however soon restores its flesh ; but the hump does not recover its fat until some time after."



Peregrine Falcon.

During the day our party rode out to hunt and shoot, partly for amusement, but chiefly for the benefit of their cook's larder. The sheikh, according to Arab notions of hospitality to guests, as stated above, had sent liberal supplies of dates, bread, meat, truffles, etc., to their tent; yet, partly for the sake of varying their diet, and partly because they loved the taste of game, they sought to add the birds or animals of the desert to the gifts of the hospitable Arab.

The sheikh, who owned some trained hawks and hounds, sent some of his attendants with them on their expedition. One of the hawks brought a bustard to the ground.

The boys had never before that day seen any hunting with a falcon. They had read of hawking or falconry as a noble sport, and had often seen pictures of gay courtiers and aristocratic maidens, with huntsmen carrying falcons on their wrists. But to-day they saw an Arab falconer carrying a hooded falcon a-field, and making its instincts do service by capturing a bustard for the game-bag. When the bustard was seen

flying, as is its habit, near the ground, the falcon was freed from its keeper's hand. Away it went in swift pursuit. As soon as it overtook the bustard, which dropped to the ground as if to fight for its life, the falcon pounced upon it and tried to pierce it to death with its beak. The bustard, however, was no coward. It fought desperately with wings and beak. For a time it seemed doubtful which would conquer, but after a few minutes the falcon conquered. Then the falconer uttered a peculiar call and swung a piece of flesh in the air. The falcon, trained to obey this call, quitted its prey and promptly devoured the bit of flesh which was its reward for the service rendered. Like most all hunting for sport, it was cruelty to the bustard, but being quite a novelty to our young travelers it afforded them much amusement.

Still more exciting to them was the attack of the hawk upon a swift gazelle, which was started from its hiding-place by the sheikh's hounds. Away flew the falcon in rapid pursuit of the affrighted creature. On coming up with its

prey the hawk pounced upon its head, striking it with its beak between the horns and throwing it down. In its struggle for life, the gazelle rose to its feet, only to be struck a second time by its fierce foe. The hound, trained to follow the movement of the falcon, then seized the gazelle and held it fast until the falconer came up and killed the panting creature with a spear.

“I never saw such sport before in my life,” said Richard, clapping his hands gleefully when the capture of the gazelle was completed.

“It is exciting sport,” replied Ronald; “but I did pity that poor gazelle, it looked so pitifully that I could scarcely help crying.”

The cry of the hounds prevented further conversation. The creatures had started a fox, which, after being coursed awhile, made out to escape. A couple of hares were less successful, and were carefully bagged by the doctor. Quails were abundant in the thick growths of wild oats; and after several hours of healthful riding they returned to their tent well satisfied with the fruits of their excursion.

As they rode leisurely back to their tent, the doctor, in reply to the inquiries of the boys, explained the manner in which the Arabs trained their hawks. They began, he said, by feeding the hawk with raw meat, placing it the first day on the ground. The next few days its meat is fed to it from the hands of the falconer, who holds the meat a little higher each day, until the bird learns to seize it at any height he chooses to hold it. After this its meat is placed on the back of a fowl. When the hawk learns to take it thence, the fowl is killed and its liver fed to the falcon. Next a bustard is captured alive, and used the same way as the fowl. By this time the hawk has been taught to pounce on the bustard whenever it sees one and is freed from its tresses.

In training the hawk to hunt the gazelle a bit of raw meat is tied to the head of a stuffed animal and fed to it daily. The next step is to place its meat between the horns of a tame living gazelle. Every day the falconer carries his hawk farther from the gazelle, until it will

fly half a mile to take its ration from the creature's head. The final step in its training is to set loose a hound on the gazelle at the same moment the hawk is set free. Away it flies after the frightened animal, which is soon caught by the hound and thrown to the ground. The falconer then hastens to the prostrate beast, cuts its throat and feeds the hawk upon a portion of its flesh. This cruelty is repeated usually three times, after which the hound and the falcon are sufficiently trained to hunt in company, the bird soon learning to select the same animal as the hound, even in a large herd of gazelles, and to strike it on the head with its powerful beak.

After satisfying the very proper curiosity of the lads, the doctor led the way at a sharp canter to their tent, where, after the sport of the afternoon, they ate their meal with that best of sauces—keen hunger caused by active exercise in the open air.

When talking over the events of the day, as they sat lolling at the tent-door in the evening, Ronald said: "One thing struck me as very odd

to-day. We are in what is called the Great Arabian Desert, yet when we rode out of this wady, and got a good view of the level beyond it, I think I never saw any thing more beautiful. It was as gay as one of our cultivated gardens at home. I noticed marigolds, asters, tulips, and wall-flowers, and they seem to cover the plain as far as I could see."

"Yes," added Richard, with a merry smile; "and I, too, wondered when I saw geraniums and purple stalks growing in such vast beds in the wady, whether, after all, our tutor and the doctor had not been playing a big joke with us, by bringing us into the Vale of Cashmere, perhaps, and misnaming it the Desert of the Euphrates."

"Possibly you might not see any point to your joke, Master Richard," replied the professor, laughing, "if we were to bring you here next May. Then, instead of the deep green of the wady and the lovely floral carpet on the level plain, you would see scarcely a sign of all this wealth of grass or of these gayly blooming

flowers. The plain would then appear to you as the symbol of drought and barrenness, while the green of the wady would be replaced with the yellow of the dried-up grasses and shrubs. You would, if compelled to cross it then, be in no doubt about being in the Arabian desert."

"What do these Arabs do, sir, when the hot season turns their pastures into a real desert?" asked Ronald.

To this query the doctor replied: "They move northward into what is called the upper Syrian desert and into the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, where, even in summer, they find water and pasture of some sort for their camels, goats, and sheep. There they find themselves in the neighborhood of towns and villages with whose inhabitants they trade and with whom they leave their sheep during their winter wanderings toward the south of the desert. The coming of the first frosts and rains in autumn is the signal for the renewal of their southern journeys, since the rain quickly transforms the desert from a scene of barrenness into

one of plenty and beauty, as you see it now. Thus you see that these Arabs of the desert spend their lives with no fixed homes. Like the patriarch, Ishmael, they wander from place to place, and are apparently content without any abiding place. The wide desert over which they annually range, to the extent of ten degrees of latitude, is included in their conception of home, since to them any spot covered by their tent is the only resting-place they either know or desire. But Richard is nodding, I see, and we will finish our talk about our Arab friends to-morrow."

CHAPTER VIII.

HUZZA FOR BAGDAD !

OUR active Boston boys, after spending a few days in the Arab encampment, began to grow weary of such an idle life. If they had been able to speak their language they might, perhaps, have found some amusement talking and playing with the sober-faced Arab boys, of whom there were a goodly number in the camp. As it was they could only stand silently watching them as they mounted their horses and galloped in fearless fashion round the purlieus of the camping ground. As there was little variety in these exercises, they soon grew tired of watching them. Their daily morning pursuit of game with the doctor outside the wady was their only real relief from dullness. After dinner they roamed almost listlessly among the tents until, tired of looking at the indolent Arabs lolling in

the shade of their tents, and at the women repeating the same simple domestic tasks every day, they would return to their own tents yawning with weariness, and wishing themselves in some other place, where, as Richard phrased his desire, "there was something worth looking at, and something for a fellow to do."

"Well, what have you seen to-day, young gentlemen?" asked the professor, one afternoon, as they strolled into the tent and stretched themselves lazily on its carpet.

"Exactly what we saw yesterday," curtly replied Richard in a gruff, dissatisfied tone of voice.

"Was there nothing visible that was new and strange to you, Richard?"

"No, nothing more than we have seen every day since we came into this sleepy hollow."

"You forgot one thing, Dick," said Ronald, "don't you recollect those women in the rear of the old sheikh's tent who were grinding wheat?"

"No, I don't. But that was nothing wonderful, was it?"

"Perhaps not wonderful, but I thought it

worth seeing, because it reminded me of that Bible text which speaks of two women grinding at the mill. It has often puzzled me to understand what kind of a mill it could be with



WOMEN AT THE MILL.

which two women could grind wheat. But to-day we saw such a mill. It was two circular stones, about eighteen inches across, placed one upon the other on a cloth spread upon the

ground. The top stone seemed to rest on a wooden peg or pivot, and had a wooden handle by which it was turned round. Two women sat beside it on the grass. One of them took wheat by the handful out of a bag and dropped it into a hole through which the loose pivot ran. The other woman turned the handle very fast. The wheat, falling through the hole and between the upper and lower stones, was then ground into meal, which we saw dropping from between the stones upon the cloth beneath."

"A very capital description that, Master Ronald!" exclaimed the professor. "And in seeing that mill, you saw how the people of the desert, and of eastern cities, too, in very ancient times, ground their grain. It explains what Isaiah the prophet meant when he told the 'daughter of Babylon' to 'sit in the dust, and to take the millstones and grind meal.'"

"I didn't think much of the mill," said Richard, "but I did think that those loafing Arab men might have worked that old mill instead of putting such a task on their women."

"It would not be safe to say that to an Arab," replied the professor, "for he considers it beneath the dignity of a man to do domestic work of any kind ; therefore he places the drudgery of his tent on women's shoulders."

"I wouldn't give a fig for an Arab's dignity, then," said Ronald ; "but, professor, we saw those women make their meal into bread. They gathered some of it into a bowl, poured water upon it, and kneaded it into little round balls. These balls they rolled into thin cakes on a wooden platter. Then, quick as a wink, they slipped the cakes from the roller on to a thin iron plate which they had placed over a tiny fire that was burning in a hole on the ground near by. These cakes were soon baked and carried into the tent."

"That, too, is the ancient Oriental mode of bread-making," said the professor. "It is, probably, the way that Sarah made cakes for the three angels who visited the tent of Abraham, as related in the Book of Genesis."

Just at that moment the doctor entered the

tent, and interrupted their conversation by saying: "We are going to witness a furious desert storm, the clouds have been gathering several hours, and are now formed into a vast circle. Step outside and watch them. It is a sight worth seeing."

The boys, seeing how calmly the doctor spoke, did not give way to fear, as they might have done had he been excited. But when they were in the open air and saw the angry clouds gathered into a vast wheel, and slowly but majestically whirling round, their hearts began to beat somewhat violently. It was an awful spectacle, such as they had never witnessed in their New England home. Their faces turned pale when they saw fierce flashes of forked lightning leap incessantly from every part of that wonderful cloud-wheel which was constantly growing larger as immense masses of clouds rose up from all parts of the desert, and were drawn as by an unseen but irresistible force into the fiery vortex. On, on it came toward the camp. The boys trembled with apprehension. Even the

doctor wore an anxious look as it approached them, and they retreated within the door of their tent for shelter. Presently a deluge of rain mingled with hailstones larger than marbles burst upon the encampment. They held their breath from fear, but breathed freely again when the terrible cloud-wheel rolled grandly away to another part of the desert.

“Thanks to our heavenly Father!” exclaimed the doctor with reverence, “that danger has passed. We were only just within the edge of the storm, which might, had we felt its full force, have swept us and our encampment to destruction.” Then, pointing to the west, he added: “See that golden sunset! and let it teach you that behind the terrors of nature the God of love reigns for evermore.”

The sight of an excited horseman galloping past now arrested their attention. The rider drew bridle in front of the sheikh’s tent, which he quickly entered. A few minutes passed, during which our party gazed with inquiring eyes upon the sheikh’s tent, until they saw sev-

eral Arabs quit it and walk off with rapid steps in different directions. This movement led the doctor to say :

“That Arab probably brought news of an expected raid on our encampment by some tribe with which our sheikh is at variance. I will go and find out if I can.”

The doctor's impression proved to be correct. The Arab horseman had brought word that a large camp of Arabs, thought to be enemies, was moving across the desert toward them. Orders were, therefore, issued for breaking up the encampment at sunrise the next morning, and for marching the tribe farther south, and for its fighting horsemen to start in the direction of the approaching Arabs to learn who they were, and, if necessary, to fight them.

The two boys, in happy ignorance of their own danger in case of a successful attack on their sheikh's party, were delighted with the prospect of the morrow's march. Richard gave undignified expression to his gladness by turning a somersault on the tent carpet. Ronald

with equal joy, but greater propriety of manner, said, gleefully :

“Huzza for Bagdad ! I’ve had enough of the dull life of an Arab camp, and shall be quite ready to go home when I have had a peep at the city of the wonderful caliph who used to go round the streets of Bagdad in all sorts of disguises.”

To add to their satisfaction, the doctor told them that the line of march to be taken by their Arab friends would soon bring them to some point on the route usually taken by caravans traveling between Damascus and Bagdad, and he added, “We will join the first caravan we happen to meet, and go direct to Bagdad.”

“I recollect,” said Ronald, “hearing one of our fellows recite a passage from Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost,’ in which there were three or four lines about Araby the Happy. Shall we pass through that part of Arabia in going to Bagdad ?”

The doctor laughed so significantly at this inquiry that Ronald, feeling that he had probably

betrayed his ignorance of Arabian geography, blushed and looked half-ashamed. Nor was he much relieved when the doctor, addressing his brother, asked, "Can you recite the passage to which he refers?"

"I think I can," the professor replied. "Milton, in describing Paradise, speaks of its perfumed gales, and, by way of illustrating his meaning, introduces the simile of a ship sailing from the Cape of Good Hope through the Mozambique Channel into the Arabian Sea. On reaching the coast of Southern Arabia the voyagers find themselves where the

" 'North-east winds blow
Sabeian odors from the spicy shore
Of Araby the blest. With such delay,
Well pleased, they slack their course, and many a league
Cheered with the grateful smell, old ocean smiles.' "

By this time Ronald, whose question was asked more in thoughtlessness than in real ignorance of geography, had brought to mind the conformation of the African peninsula, and he now remarked :

“Please excuse me, doctor, I had forgotten for the moment that Bagdad is an inland city and that Arabia Felix is back of the coast of the Arabian Sea. But will you please tell us why it is so named? Is it really a happy and blessed country?”

“Compared with the stony and desert portions of Arabia it is, indeed, a pleasant land. If you should travel south of this portion of the desert you would find yourself in a boundless waste of sand without a tree to shelter you from the scorching sun, or to protect you from the suffocating winds which sweep across the dreary landscape. So fearful are those hot winds at times, that they form whirlwinds of sand beneath which whole caravans of travelers, and even armies of soldiers, are sometimes buried. No vegetation grows there to relieve the weary eyes of the unhappy pilgrims whose way leads through it. No rivers glide through those terrible sands. Wells are scarce, and when one passes from the level part of the desert into the mountains which intersect it, one

finds them naked, steep, and destitute of beauty. But if one succeeds in reaching the high lands



SAND-STORM IN THE DESERT.

on the southern border of the desert, he finds shady groves, running streams, fertile fields, trees that bear delicious fruits, and shrubs which make the air delightful with their sweet perfume. The stately palm, the elegant tamarind-tree, give a charm to the scenery; the coffee-tree, the balm-tree, the frankincense-tree, the

fig-tree, and the vine are there, and in the gardens of Tayef roses of the most exquisite beauty and fragrance afford rare delight to the senses. All this makes it a goodly land, but when contrasted with the sandy and rocky portions, it appears almost paradisaical. Hence you can readily understand why the Arabs call it Arabia the Happy."

"I recollect," observed the professor, "that Burekhardt was much pleased with it, and, speaking of his journey from Tayef to Mecca, he says that at sunrise every tree and shrub exhaled a delicious fragrance. Hence when Milton called it Araby the Blest, he only spoke the simple truth so far as the country itself was concerned. Had he written of the people who inhabit it, some other descriptive term would have been more fitting. The followers of the false prophet may be physically comfortable in such a land, but there is no power in their religious creed to make them happy."

The boys thanked the doctor for his description of Araby the Blest, and Ronald said:

"You have told me facts which give that pretty phrase a meaning to me which it never had before. But you spoke of the coffee-tree growing there, Dr. Benedict. Did that tree grow there before it grew anywhere else?"

"You mean to ask if it was indigenous there, or did it originate somewhere else, I suppose?" rejoined the doctor. "That is a question I cannot answer, for the reason that learned men are not agreed upon it. Some think that Arabia Felix *is* the birthplace of the coffee-tree; others think that it was first found in Abyssinia, on the opposite side of the Red Sea, and taken to Yemen in the fourteenth century. The Arabians believe this, and say that the plant was brought to them by a holy man named Shadeli, whom for this reason they regard as a benefactor to mankind. And they never lift a cup of coffee to their lips without previously giving him praise in a short prayer."

"That would prove, I should think, that the Arabs are very fond of coffee," said Ronald.

"Possibly they are, yet it may surprise you

to be told that in Araby the Blest the Arabs seldom use the coffee *bean* for making a drink," replied the doctor.

"Not use the bean!" exclaimed Ronald. "How, then, can they be said to drink coffee, as you just now said they did?"

"They use the *husk* in which the bean lies, and send the bean to Mokha for sale," the doctor replied. "The infusion made from the husk they call, not coffee, but *keshir*. Travelers tell us that in the province of Yemen huts are found along the road side for the sale of this drink to travelers. Many such huts have been built and endowed by pious Arabs in which poor travelers are permitted to remain three days, and are supplied, free of cost, with *keshir*, and an article of food called *durra*."

"You spoke of Mokha, sir," said Richard. "I have often seen Mocha coffee advertised in the Boston papers. Is the coffee so named grown in Arabia?"

"Most of the coffee grown in Yemen is sent to Mokha for sale, and goes by that name in

our markets ; but great quantities are grown in Africa, which is also sold under that name. But it is now high time for us to attend to our evening worship, since we shall have to be astir bright and early to-morrow.”

Thus saying, the doctor requested his brother to read from the divine word, after which they sung an evening hymn, commended themselves and the dear ones at home to their heavenly Father, and then slept the sweet sleep of them that trust in God.

The next morning our travelers looked with surprise at the rapidity with which the tents were taken down, the baggage camels loaded, the encampment broken up, and the march begun. There were signs at first of the haste which is caused by fear. But these signs disappeared when a spy who had been sent out the previous evening returned with tidings that the tribe thought at first to be enemies were friends, and that they were desirous of uniting the fighting forces of both camps to make a raid on a common enemy, who, they said, was within fight-

ing distance. This news, however, did not prevent the march of their friends southward, because the wady had been pretty well shorn of its grass during their stay.

Our boy travelers while on the march that day led the professor to tell them some stories of the great Haroun-al-Raschid, who, in the days of his prime, used often to cross the great Arabian desert on his pilgrimages from Bagdad to Mecca.

“The caliph,” said the professor, “while on one of those pilgrimages, met an old woman in the desert. ‘Tell me,’ said he, ‘to what tribe you belong?’ The woman replied, ‘To the Taiy.’

“‘Ah! how is it that your tribe cannot produce another Hátim?’ asked the caliph.

“Now Hátim Taiy was an Arab who lived prior to the times of Mohammed, and had a great reputation for princely liberality. The old lady, who knew the caliph’s love of adroit flattery, quickly responded, ‘How is it that the whole race of the caliphs never produced one like you, O commander of the faithful?’

“The monarch, pleased with the old woman’s compliment, commanded his treasurer to give her a liberal sum of money, and sent her on her way proud of her own ready wit, and rejoicing in the good fortune which had led her into the caliph’s presence.”

“Ha, ha,” laughed Richard, “that old Arab must have been an ancestress of our Yankees. She knew how to answer one question by asking another.”

“That’s so,” added Ronald, “and she also knew how to make her ready wit pay. Her words tickled the caliph’s vanity.”

“I suppose,” remarked the professor, “that her knowledge of his readiness to put any one to death who gave him offense made her and all his subjects very careful of their speech when they addressed him. He thought it a trifling matter to order a man’s head to be cut off. It is written of him that one day he heard of a Jew astrologer who had said, ‘The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid will die within a year.’

“Like all Arabs, he was very superstitious,

and the Jew's prediction made him very melancholy. Yahya, his vizier, tried in vain to comfort him by making light of the astrologer's speech. Finding that his prince's sadness grew upon him, the vizier sent for the Jew, and, in the presence of Haroun, asked him, 'How long do you think you will live?'

"Very promptly the foolish fellow replied, 'My art teaches me that I shall live to a ripe old age.'

"The vizier, turning to the caliph, coolly asked, 'Will the commander of the faithful order him to be immediately executed?'

" 'O certainly,' said Haroun.

"At a sign from the vizier, Mezzur, the black executioner, was brought in with his naked cimeter in his right hand. Yahya pointed to the trembling Jew. Without an instant's delay Mezzur severed his head from his body. After which the pitiless vizier said to the caliph:

" 'Your majesty sees the value of that fellow's predictions.'

"Haroun's melancholy vanished at once. His

cunning vizier's cruel argument was undeniable."

"But don't you suppose that the murder of that poor Jew troubled the caliph?" asked Ronald.

"Not in the least. He thought no more, not as much, indeed, of beheading a man than you would of cutting off the head of a chicken. He did not doubt that, as commander of the faithful, and the vicegerent of God, he had an unquestionable right to take the life of any one of his subjects who might displease him. That right no man in his kingdom dared to dispute—perhaps did not dream of disputing. The caliph also had the right to depute absolute power to his grand vizier. Hence, when he ascended his throne, he gave his signet ring to Yahya, the first person he placed in that high office, saying, 'I invest you with the rule over my subjects. Rule them as you please, depose whom you will, and put whom you will into office.' Hence, if a caliph was indolent and self-indulgent, a vizier became the actual ruler of the people. Haroun, however, was by no means an

idle prince, but kept his keen eye constantly on the affairs of his vast empire, on his vizier as well as on his other officers."

"Do you think, professor," asked Ronald, "that when King David caused Uriah to be killed, he felt like the caliph, that, as a king, he had a right to take a man's life?"

"I think not," replied Professor Benedict. "David, though a king, knew God's law which said, 'Thou shalt do no murder.' And in the fifty-first Psalm, which was his prayer of penitence for that crime, he said, 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.' He knew that God did not give even a king permission to trample on his law. If the caliph had been taught God's law, and not the Koran, he would have been too wise a man to believe that kings can commit murder and be innocent."

CHAPTER IX.

FAREWELL TO THE ARAB CAMP.

THE professor's stories of Caliph Haroun were interrupted by a sudden change in the direction of the Arabs' march. Without any reason apparent to our travelers, their wandering friends turned from south to the south-west, as if they meant to travel toward Damascus instead of Bagdad. The professor asked his brother what this change meant. The doctor replied :

“I really do not know, unless it may be that they have missed their landmark and are in search of some sign by which to assure themselves that they are going in the direction of some wells, around which they intend to pitch their tents to-night. They do not use the compass. They do not determine the course of their march by the sun, but trust for guidance

to such way-marks as those plants and grasses which only grow in the neighborhood of wells. They will not go far to the west, but, having found their landmark, will turn southward again, as we shall soon see."

The doctor's opinion proved to be correct. But the zigzag movement of the tribe brought into the view of our travelers the spectacle of a sick man seated on a camel with his body so bent down that his head was actually lower than his feet. At times the poor fellow nearly fell from the camel's back. Again and again he would have actually fallen but for the timely help of his sons and the women of his tent, who walked beside the animal. The boys looked with surprise and pity on this helpless sufferer. After he had passed Ronald exclaimed :

"How cruel to make a sick man travel in that fashion !"

"These sons of the desert do not think so," the doctor said. "It is their fashion. The tribe is more than the one man, who is not much considered when the interests of the whole camp

are at stake. The poor wretch yonder is no doubt dying, and when we reach the camping spot he will be placed in his tent, his friends will sit round him and talk until he breathes his last, which he will probably do to-night or to-morrow."

"But wont they try to cure him?" asked Richard.

"Not at all. These Arabs of the plains have no doctors. They know nothing of medicines. Their mode of life from childhood is so simple and healthful that they are rarely sick; but if disease does attack them, or if they are badly wounded in battle, they usually die. If you have observed them closely you have noticed that there is not a man in this tribe over sixty years old, and very few have reached their fiftieth year. Most of their dead passed to their graves from their first attack of severe sickness. Hence, when any of them are seized by disease they do not look for recovery, but expect death with the stolid indifference of men who are trained to doggedly submit to fate."

"But are they not afraid to die?" inquired Ronald.

"It seems not," replied the doctor. "If they are Mohammedans, as the Arabs of the cities and their vicinities are, they expect to cross the 'bridge of the single hair' into Paradise, as their Koran teaches all true Mohammedans do; if they are pure Bedouins of the desert, their ideas of the Supreme Being are summed up in the phrase, 'God is God.' But to such questions as 'What is God?' 'Is there a divine law?' 'Will men have to give account to God in the future life?' they give little or no thought. God to them is simply irresistible fate. It is a cheerless creed, if creed it can be called—but see! As I told you it would, our line of march has changed again. The van of our tribe is again heading toward the south-east. Its leader has found the trail to the wells he was looking for."

"I am right glad of that!" exclaimed Richard; "for I'm getting tired of this stupid life in the desert, where one has to see the same per-

sons and things over and over again every day. I shall be as happy as a king when we get to old Bagdad."

"If that is all you expect," said the professor, laughing, "your hope is not a very bright one, Master Richard."

"O, I meant as happy as good Haroun-al-Raschid, the caliph of Bagdad, when I said king: and if the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments' tells the truth, he must have been a very jolly fellow. He did as he pleased, and had lots of fun going around his city in the night, with his merry companion, Jaafer the Barmecide, in all sorts of disguises, and finding out on the sly what his people said and did. And didn't he have a good time when he had the fellows who talked against him in their houses brought into his palace the next day? How chop-fallen they must have been when they learned that the caliph had been a witness of their naughty acts and speeches, and how he must have laughed at their confusion!"

"Yes, Dick," replied Ronald; "it was fun

for him, but what was it for the poor fellows whom he confounded when they found themselves at the mercy of a caliph who thought less of cutting off a man's head than of losing his dinner? But I wonder how much of what the 'Arabian Nights' says about the mighty Haroun is true. Please tell us, professor?"

"No doubt there is a vein of truth running through the legends of that fascinating volume. Haroun, who ascended his throne about the year 788, when he was twenty-two years old, was, as historians tell us, 'the most accomplished, eloquent, and generous of all the caliphs of Bagdad.' But there were two sides to his character. The legends of the 'Arabian Nights' chiefly portray its attractive side; history paints both. Shall I tell you of his first act after he returned from the mosque, in which he had offered the prayers proper to a new caliph just mounting his throne?"

"Do, professor; we shall be glad to know what it was," said Ronald.

"Well, you must know, then, that while

Haroun was only a prince, and heir to the throne, his brother, El Hadi, the reigning caliph, sought to set him aside, and to make his own son, the youthful Prince Jaafar, caliph instead of Haroun. Prince Jaafar had a friend named Abu Isma who favored El Hadi's scheme. As he and this prince were walking one day in the city of Isabad, they happened to meet Prince Haroun in a narrow archway. On seeing him, Abu Isma cried out:

“‘Make way for the heir-apparent!’

“Bowling with mock humility, Prince Haroun replied, ‘I hear, and obey.’ Then, stepping aside, he let Prince Jaafar pass by.

“If Haroun had been as generous as the historians say he was, he would have overlooked this foolish speech of young Abu Isma after he found himself in undisputed possession of the throne. Instead of doing so, however, he no sooner had the scepter in his hands than he sent for his executioner, and said, ‘Go, cut off the head of Abu Isma!’”

“That was making poor Abu Isma pay a

high price for saying a few foolish words. I don't call that a proof of either goodness or greatness in the mighty Haroun," said Ronald. "If I were made a king, I shouldn't like to stain my hands with blood on the day of my coronation."

The professor then reminded his young pupils of what he had told them before, that many things which were really wicked did not appear so to Haroun, because he had been taught that, as caliph, he was the vicegerent of God, and therefore had a perfect right to take the life or property of any of his subjects. This view of himself naturally spoiled all the good there was in his nature. It made him proud, self-willed, capricious, passionate, and cruel. The wonder is, that it did not lead him to destroy the glory of his empire by putting men in power, not for their ability, but for their subserviency to his whims."

"Yes," remarked the doctor; "it is surprising, but Haroun, with all his caprice, rarely forgot that he was both a caliph and a man, and

that his glory and greatness depended very much on the kind of men who served him."

"Your remark is just, my brother," said the professor, "and reminds me of the way in which Haroun made Ismail-ibu-Salih governor of Egypt."

A misstep of the professor's horse caused him to stop speaking just at this point. As soon as the horse was reined up, and brought back to his usual quiet trot between the ponies of our young travelers, Ronald said, "Please, professor, tell us about Ismail?"

"Ismail-ibu-Salih," replied Mr. Benedict, "was the brother of a man who had greatly offended the caliph, and was kept a prisoner in his own house. One day the caliph sent his vizier's son, El Fadhl, to bring Ismail to his palace. 'Don't go,' said the brother who was in disgrace. 'They only want you to drink with them, and sing to them, and if you do so you are no brother of mine.'

"But, being persuaded by El Fahdl, Ismail went. The caliph received him graciously, in-

vited him to dine at his table, and to drink wine with him. Ismail ate the dinner, but refused the wine, when the caliph cried out, ‘By Allah! I will not drink unless Ismail drinks with me.’

“‘But, my lord, I have sworn to do nothing of the sort,’ replied Ismail.

“Nevertheless, perhaps through fear, he consented at last to drink wine. After this the caliph ordered his singing and dancing girls to amuse him and his guest. By and by Ismail grew merry. Then the caliph took a lute from the hands of one of the singing girls, threw a string of very precious stones over it, and placing it in Ismail’s lap, said :

“‘Come, sing us something, and expiate your oath out of this rosary!’

“This valuable gift pleased Ismail, and, taking the lute, he sang these lines :

“‘My hands to sin I never taught,
 My feet to faults have never led,
 Nor eye, nor ear, have ever brought
 A sinful thought into my head,
 And if I now my fate deplore,
 ’Tis but the fate of folks before.’

“Something in the sentiment of this stanza, or in Ismail’s singing, so pleased the caliph’s fancy that he shouted, ‘Bring me a lance!’ It was brought. Affixing the banner of Egypt to its point, Haroun handed it to Ismail, an act which signified that he was appointed governor of the province of Egypt!

“This was certainly a capricious mode of appointing a governor, but no doubt the caliph knew what the man’s abilities were. It is recorded that Ismail, after leaving his province, said, ‘I ruled it for two years, and I loaded it with justice, and came away with five hundred thousand dinars [\$1,250,000] in my pocket!’ By justice this man probably meant such a rigid exercise of authority as kept down rebellion, for beyond that his rule must have been a constant and cruel robbery of his subjects, or he could not have carried away such an enormous sum of money. But the caliph did not care how much his people were robbed, provided they were kept in subjection to his rule.”

At this point in their conversation our trav-

elers observed signs of a halt in the march of the Arabs; they had reached a well-watered wady, and were about to pitch the tents.

The boys strongly insisted that evening that they were thoroughly tired of life in the desert. They had seen all of the life of the nomad tribe they cared to see, and were desirous, as Ronald said, "to see the city in which the famous Haroun-al-Raschid lived." Their tutors were also quite weary of the monotony of desert life, and the doctor, having learned through Hassan that there would be little doubt of their striking a caravan somewhere in the lower Euphrates Valley, on the route from Aleppo or Damascus to Bagdad, they gleefully resolved that they would start their own party the next day, under Hassan's guidance.

The next morning they bade farewell to the sheikh of the tribe, and pushed on alone in high spirits. But when fairly out of sight of the Arab camp, and with nothing to be seen but the boundless sky above them, and the vast expanse of flowery plain around them, unbroken

by objects of any kind, except here and there a solitary bird from some distant wady, the boys fairly shivered from a sense of loneliness such as they had never felt before. But Hassan's knowledge of the desert and God's good care brought them, after a few days, to the banks of the Euphrates near a place named Hit. Here they found a caravan, with merchandise on horses, camels, mules, and donkeys, bound to Bagdad. Joining these travelers, they, after four days' farther travel on the banks of the river, made unpleasant by cold and wet weather, arrived at a ferry by which travelers to Bagdad crossed the Euphrates.

The presence of a ferry-boat on the Euphrates suggested to Ronald some random recollections of the march of Alexander the Great from Palestine to Babylon, and turning to the professor who had dismounted, and was standing by the head of his horse, he asked:

"Can you tell me, professor, if this is the place at which Alexander crossed the Euphrates when he marched his army to Babylon?"

“This is not a *ford*, Ronald,” replied Mr. Benedict, with a smile, “but a *ferry*, and it offers no special advantage to an army not very well supplied with pontoons, which, as I suppose, Alexander’s was not. No, it was not here, but much farther up the river, at Thapsacus, which was in his time the only known ford on the Euphrates. It was not far from the point where we first struck the river, and is now called Rakka, as you may see by your map.”

Hearing the name of Alexander the Great mentioned, Richard, holding his pony by the bridle, had drawn near to his brother, and as the doctor was directing their attendants respecting their approach to the ferry landing, and there was time for further conversation, he ventured to remark :

“I little thought when I read the life of Alexander the Great that I should ever be so near the ground over which he marched as we are to-day. Why we shall cross his line of march on our way to Bagdad, shall we not?”

“That is not certain, Richard. At least I

think it is not, because it is unknown whether he recrossed the Tigris after his great victory over Darius at Arbela before he passed the site of Bagdad, which city did not exist in his time. If he did not, then, of course, we shall not cross his line of march. But if we visit the ruins of Babylon, then we shall assuredly stand on some of the historic ground over which he and his victorious Macedonians marched to reap one rich fruit of their victory in the surrender of the once mighty Babylon."

"Well, professor," replied Richard, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Alexander, "I cannot help thinking that king Darius was a cowardly fellow as well as a poor soldier. Just think of his keeping his army under arms all the night before a battle for fear of being surprised! Couldn't he have posted sentinels to watch the Greeks? No wonder his men could not do their level best after being awake all night. Then what a soft cake he was not to rally his troops after the Greeks had charged through his line! If I had been he, I would

have closed in on Alexander's phalanx and fought it on its flanks and rear. Instead of doing that, he no sooner learned that his line was broken than he called for his horse, and, riding swiftly away, left his army to take care of itself. I despise such fellows as Darius!"

Both Ronald and the professor laughed outright at Richard's fit of heroics. Ronald replied, in a somewhat satirical tone, 'Dick, don't forget the proverb which says, 'Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is better.' It is much easier, you know, to brag when there is no danger than to hold fast when such desperate fellows as those Greeks were are pushing their spears through your friends like an avalanche of steel."

Richard blushed under this rather sharp retort; but keeping his temper he rejoined, with a modest air, "Yes, I know it is, but I do think, if I were a king and a general, I would rather die fighting than to show the white feather and run away from my troops, as the faint-hearted Darius did."

The professor helped Richard out of his little embarrassment, by saying, "I think you would, Richard, because I believe you have the genuine American grit, the mettle that makes a brave soldier. I suppose Darius was not naturally gifted with either military skill or personal physical courage. His training had not been such as to beget that higher moral courage by which force of will overcomes the fear which makes men cowards. He had lived on luxuries, had feasted his soul on flatteries, and he trusted to the vast number of men who followed his standards. Hence the fierce charges of Alexander's veterans terrified him, and he fled at the battle of Arbela, as he had previously done at the battle of Issus. He was not fitted for the place he filled; neither were his soft-hearted Persians a match for the men of iron who fought under the skillful direction of Alexander, to whom fighting was almost as natural as breathing. I loathe, pity, and despise Darius. I look with wonder on Alexander, but I despise his character, also, because it was cruel and selfish to

the last degree. But the doctor calls us to the bank of the river: let us move toward the ferry-landing!"

His exploits were great; yet he made war, not to benefit either his own country or the people whom he conquered, but to gratify his own restless soul, which delighted in the excitements of the march and of the battle-field, and to cover his own name with glory.

CHAPTER X.

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT IN BAGDAD.

WHILE our travelers were waiting to go on board the big ferry-boat in which they were to cross the Euphrates, the boys were amused by seeing two Turkish ladies, with black veils, dressed in striped calico sacks and European boots, waiting for their turn to enter the boat. Richard nudged his brother's arm and said :

“Look, Ronald, at those queer creatures! If it were not for their heads, one might take them to be two bags with live animals tied up inside.”

“Poor things!” replied Ronald; “they have been traveling four weeks in those hooded panniers you see on the back of yonder gaunt mule. What a shaking up they must have had every day! The professor says they are the

wives of Turkish officers, and are on their way to join their husbands in Bagdad."

"Well, I hope they will have a better time when they get there than they have had on their journey," rejoined Richard. "But we must hurry up; the doctor is calling us to move on to the boat."

It took the crowded boat some twenty minutes to reach the opposite bank, at a place named Seglawieh, which they were told was forty miles from Bagdad. They had been delayed so long in crossing the river that it was after noon before they had their baggage at hand and their attendants ready for a start. Desirous as they were to reach Bagdad as quickly as possible, they, nevertheless, found it necessary to encamp for the night in a pleasant grove at no great distance from the river, that the doctor's gun might procure them some birds for their now scanty larder. There was larger game in the adjacent wood, on the edge of which a number of wild boars had put in a momentary appearance. But, not being dis-

posed to venture on the dangerous sport of the boar hunt, they were content with the francolins and a couple of hares with which the doctor filled his game-bag.

After supper that afternoon the professor said to Richard : " You were wishing this morning that you might walk on soil once trodden by Alexander, the ambitious Macedonian conqueror. Do you know that you are now in the birth-land of a greater than Alexander ! "

" A greater than Alexander ! " exclaimed Richard, in an impassioned tone. " Why, professor, I did not know that there had ever been a greater soldier than the conqueror of the world. "

" I did not say a greater *soldier*, but a greater man. I referred to Abraham, the head of the Jewish race. We are now in Mesopotamia, which was his native land. The Greeks called it the land between the rivers, because it is principally situated between the Tigris and the Euphrates, where we now are. Abraham's early home was probably farther south, some-

where within what was afterward called Babylonia, when God bade him quit his kindred and travel to a region of which he was to know nothing until God should lead him into it."

Ronald was delighted at the thought of being in the early home of the greatest of the Jewish patriarchs, and only regretted that there were no traces to be found of the precise spots on which he had fed his flocks and from which he drove his camels as an inspired pilgrim traveling he knew not whither. But Richard did not share his brother's enthusiasm for Abraham. He mused awhile on what the professor had said, and finally said :

"I don't understand, professor, how you can prove that Abraham was a greater man than Alexander."

"Abraham, my dear boy, was master of himself; Alexander was not. In a fit of wrath he killed his beloved friend, Clitus, and by drunkenness shortened his own life. Abraham was governed by the will of God; Alexander by his own cruel, unresting selfishness. Hence, by so

much as self-mastery is greater than the mastery of others, and as obedience to God is nobler than obedience to selfish passion, by so much was Abraham greater than Alexander."

Richard could not reply to this wise putting of the case. He only bit his lips and looked askance at Mr. Benedict. He frowned on Ronald when he replied :

"That must be so, professor, for the Bible says, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' I'm sure I would rather be such a good man as Abraham than such a heartless conqueror as Alexander."

Our travelers broke camp after an early breakfast the next morning, and pushed on as quickly as possible through a pleasant undulating country, and over a soil which, though gravelly, was brightened by numerous stretches of grass.

"No fear of losing our way here," said Richard, shortly after starting; "we can follow this line of telegraph-poles, which, I suppose, we will

find all the way to Bagdad, and shall need no better guide."

The doctor told them he believed the poles did reach to that city, and that if the road



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proved good all the way, they should, without doubt, reach Bagdad by the afternoon of the next day.

"Huzza for Bagdad, then!" shouted Richard; and, urging his pony into a canter, he rode on considerably ahead of his party.

In the afternoon they reached a pretty sheet of water which swarmed with water-birds. Pelicans, with snow-white plumage, and colored wild-fowl, floated lazily on its quiet surface, and white herons stood silent and motionless on its shores. Not far from this lake they encamped for the night, near the tents of some not very attractive Arabs, who, despite their apparent poverty, were uncommonly religious. The doctor told the boys that when Lady Blunt's party was in their camp, their sheikh, whose name was Mohammed, while talking to her ladyship suddenly rose from his carpet to his knees, and repeated his prayers. After finishing his devotions, he turned to the lady's dragoman, angrily demanding to know why he, too, had not said his prayers. At the same time another old Arab was heard praying outside the tent, but stopping every now and then to shout at a horse or donkey, or to throw a stick at a disorderly cow. These Arabs belonged to a very fanatical sect of Mohammedans, whose devotions were evidently more on the lips than from the heart.

The Arabs did not disturb our travelers, who, after passing a quiet night, resumed their journey, fully expecting to reach Bagdad early in the afternoon. But not far from their camp they found themselves close to a vast ruin which the Arabs called the Tower of Nimrod. Of course they stopped to examine it. It was a mound of sunburned brick rising to a great height, and, as Lady Blunt observed of it, it seems to be solid, and one cannot conceive for what use it was designed except, as the Bible says of the Tower of Babel, to reach to heaven. "But," said the doctor, "since the tower of Babel was not built here, but in Babylonia, it must have had other uses. Layard supposed it to have formed part of an immense wall of defense built in distant ages from the Tigris to the Euphrates to keep off the attacks of armies coming from the north." Our party spent considerable time wandering around it, picking up bits of blue pottery, while the two lads found much amusement in watching the movements of the myriads of the blue rock pigeons which

had built their nests in its countless holes and hollows. Of course the doctor's insatiate game-bag did not fail to carry away a considerable number of those dwellers among the ruins for their noonday dinner.

Leaving this vast heap of ruins our travelers pressed onward toward the Tigris and Bagdad. But their progress was much retarded by the muddiness of the road ; so much so that it was drawing toward evening when they drew nigh to the city. Then they found themselves among horsemen, and riders on white asses, hurrying toward the city. Turks in flowing robes and broad turbans ; Persians in high black caps and close-fitting tunics ; the Bokhara pilgrim in his white head-dress and way-worn garments ; the Bedouin chief in his tasseled keffie and striped aba ; Bagdad ladies with their scarlet and white draperies fretted with threads of gold, and their black horse-hair veils concealing even their eyes ; Persian women wrapped in their unsightly garments, and Arab girls in their simple blue shirts. All these formed a

motley crowd flowing toward the gates of Bagdad. The boys gazed at the scene with wonder in their eyes, and Richard exclaimed :

“ That *is* an Oriental picture, and no mistake ! ”

But our party found they had made a mistake, in that they had not given instructions to Hassan either to keep up with them or to meet them in the eastern side of the city. Hence they had to wait by the way-side until their mules and camels came up with their baggage. And when they found themselves in a street of low, shabby-looking mud hovels, on the bank of the Tigris, it was quite dark. There they halted, when the doctor said :

“ This is Bagdad ! ”

“ *This* the city of the caliph ! ” exclaimed Ronald, contemptuously.

Yes, that was the part of Bagdad on the west bank of the Tigris. As it was too late to cross the river that night, they were obliged to put up in a miserable khan built of brick. It was some thirteen feet high, with numerous cells

about eleven feet wide and eight feet in depth. It was filthy and reeking with the odor of numerous hides stored in its corners. But here, shut in by a strong door and guarded by a restless old Arab, they were obliged to spend the night. After several vain attempts to sleep they began a long talk about Bagdad in the days of its splendor, and about its most famous caliph, al-Raschid.

“In the ‘Arabian Nights,’” observed Ronald, “it is said that Jaafar, the Barmecide, used to go about Bagdad with the caliph in disguise at night. Can you tell us, professor, why he was called the Barmecide, and whether there really was such a man as Jaafar except in those stories?”

The professor said that the Jaafar of the stories was an historical character, and was called the Barmecide because he belonged to a family named Barmek, which was not of Arab but of Persian descent. His father, Yahya, was Haroun’s vizier, but for whose assistance at the time of the death of El Hadi, his predecessor, he would

have failed to gain the throne. Jaafar was Haroun's secretary. He was a very eloquent, genial, scholarly man, and for some fifteen years stood higher in his favor than any other man. But the way in which the caliph treated him and his relatives at last left a very black stain upon Haroun's memory. In spite of the military and other glories of his reign, his dealings with the Barmecides compel us to believe that he was not the "*good* al-Raschid" of those famous tales, but a cruel, false man, whose better qualities were sadly obscured by his mean and wicked deeds.

These remarks kindled the curiosity of the boys, and they begged the professor to beguile the wearisome hours by telling them the story of Jaafar and his Barmecide friends. Yielding to their request, he told them the following sad, romantic story :

"Haroun was so attached to Yahya and his sons, Jaafar and El Fadhl, that he gave them and their friends the highest offices in his empire, and heaped so many gifts upon them that they

became the owners of vast estates and lived in a style as grand almost as that of their royal master. His regard for them was so great that it seemed for a long time as if nothing could ever disturb it. But this made the men of true Arab blood jealous of the Barneicide family, and they finally took steps to excite the caliph against them.

“ They began by sending him an anonymous letter, in which it was said : ‘ Lo ! the sons of Yahya are kings like thee. Thy behests are altered by them, but theirs are implicitly obeyed. Jaafar has built a palace in the like of which no Persian or Indian ever lived. The floor thereof is set with pearls and rubies, and the ceiling thereof is of amber and aloes wood ; we even fear lest he may inherit thy kingdom when thou art hidden in the grave. None but an arrogant slave dare so vie with his lord.’ ”

“ This cunning attempt to make the caliph jealous of his favorites was followed by a sort of protest against them because they were known to belong to a sect of heretical Mussulmans.

“This appeal to Haroun’s religious preferences was followed by an act of disobedience on Jaafar’s part that fanned the spark of jealousy which the anonymous letter had kindled. ‘Go kill Abdallah the rebel,’ said the caliph one day to Jaafar, who let the condemned man escape. This act was at once reported to the king, who, sending for his secretary, said to him : ‘What has become of Abdallah ?’

“ ‘He is in prison,’ replied the unwary Jaafar.

“ ‘Will you swear it by my life ?’ demanded al-Raschid.

“Seeing he was betrayed, Jaafar replied : ‘O, commander of the faithful, I let him escape because I believed him to be innocent.’

“ ‘You have done well. I approve your action,’ rejoined the caliph, with seeming good feeling. But Jaafar was no sooner out of hearing than he added : ‘Allah kill me if I do not kill you !’

“Haroun’s jealousy of the pomp and riches of Jaafar became more intense every time he saw the splendor of his attendants or listened, as he

now took delight in doing, to the envious remarks of his enemies. Neither Jaafar nor his father suspected the change in his feelings until one day Yahya, his vizier, entered the caliph's apartments unannounced, as he had long been in the habit of doing. He saluted his majesty, who, instead of his usual friendly response, turned to his physician, who was present, and asked :

“ ‘Does any one come into your room without permission ?’

“ ‘No,’ the physician replied.

“ ‘Then why do they come into ours without asking ?’ rejoined the angry monarch, gazing fiercely on his astonished vizier. ,

“ Yahya made a humble reply. Haroun pretended to be sorry for what he had said. Yahya left, hoping that his master's rebuke was only a freak of temper. But when on his next visit to the palace he found that neither the guards nor the slaves treated him as formerly, he began to feel that he had for some unknown reason lost the favor of his royal master.

“Zobeide, the caliph’s favorite wife, discovered at this juncture that Yahya’s son Jaafar had secretly taken Haroun’s sister Abbasah to wife, and that she had borne him two sons. She hated Jaafar, and therefore told the caliph of his marriage. Haroun was enraged. His haughty pride was wounded because a Barmecide had dared to marry one of his royal race. When Zobeide left him he sent for Mezzur, and said to him, in a bitter tone :

“ ‘Mezzur, to-night, when it is dark, bring me ten masons and two servants.’ ”

“Mezzur did as he was told. Al-Raschid led him into the apartment of his sister. Then, without saying a word to the lady, he ordered the servants to cut off her head, put her body into a box, dig a hole to bury her, and restore the floor to its former appearance. When this horrid deed was done he said to Mezzur :

“ ‘Take these people and give them their hire ! ’ ”

“Mezzur understood by these words that he was to tie up the luckless masons and servants

in sacks laden with stones, and throw them into the Tigris. This he did forthwith. Yet the caliph's rage was not appeased.

"The next night he ordered Mezzur to bring Jaafar to his palace. The executioner obeyed, led the unhappy man into a tent which had been set up in the court of the palace, and said to him: 'Your time has come. The prince of the faithful has ordered me to cut off your head and take it to him at once.'

"Jaafar wept, and offered Mezzur an immense sum if he would let him escape. 'I cannot,' the executioner replied. Jaafar again wept, begged to be taken to the caliph, or that Mezzur would go in his behalf and ask Haroun to see him. Mezzur, moved by the man's tears, went to the monarch, but, finding nothing would satisfy him but his old friend's head, he returned. Seeing Jaafar on his knees, he quickly severed his head from his body, seized it by the beard, and threw it at his monarch's feet.

"Still the wrath of the prince of the faithful was not satisfied. He sent for the two sons of

Jaafar, had those innocent, beautiful boys killed and buried beside the body of their mother, and then caused a thousand of the Barmecide family to be put to death !

“ When Yahya, who was in prison, was told of Jaafar’s death, he said, ‘ So will God kill his son.’ ‘ But,’ said the messenger, ‘ he has ruined your house, too.’ The wretched father rejoined, ‘ So will God ruin his house.’ When Haroun heard of these terrible words his superstitious and guilty soul was startled, and he said, very sadly, ‘ I never knew Yahya to say any thing that did not turn out to be true.’

“ He was still more troubled when this once beloved vizier died in prison and his jailer found a paper on his person on which these ominous words were written : ‘ The accuser has gone on before to the tribunal, and the accused shall follow soon. The magistrate will be that just Judge who never errs and needs no witnesses.’

“ After the death of Yahya and the massacre of the Barmecides the caliph’s life was wretched. His popularity waned so much that he removed

his court from Bagdad to Rakka. Insurrections disturbed his empire and filled him with harassing anxieties. His later days were miserable indeed. Just before he died he ordered a captured rebel to be hacked to pieces alive before his eyes by a common butcher. This, says one of his biographers, was his last public act. Shortly after, being restless, wretched, and faint, he rallied strength enough to say :

“ ‘ Descended from a race so great,
I firmly bear the hardest fate.’ ”

And then, in the presence of his vizier, the terrible Mezrur, and one or two other officers of his court, he passed into the presence of that dreaded Judge to whose bar the much-wronged Yahya had summoned him a few years before.”

CHAPTER XI.

WALKING ABOUT BAGDAD.

EARLY in the morning, after their arrival in Bagdad, our young travelers sprung from their bed of skins in the cheerless old barrack called a "khan," rubbed their eyes, yawned through lack of sleep, and looked quite woe-begone. Richard, ever ready to utter his complaints, was the first to speak. Said he to Ronald, in a whining tone :

"If this wretched khan is the best lodging-place we can find in Bagdad, I am for getting out of it as quick as we can."

Ronald, to whom the night had been as unpleasant as to his brother, was disposed to take his discomfort in better humor, and replied : "Don't quarrel with Bagdad until you have seen more of it. We have come a long journey to see it, and I want to stay long enough to look

round a bit. ' May be we shall find that we have seen its worst side first."

"Very sensibly said, Master Ronald," remarked the doctor. "We are hardly inside Bagdad yet. The city once stretched along both banks of the Tigris, but is now chiefly on its east side. After we have got some coffee from a coffee-house which is near this khan, we will eat our breakfast and then cross the river. I have letters to the English consul. We will find him, and may be he will tell us where to find better quarters. Then we will go about and see if Bagdad retains any of the beauty which made it famous when your favorite Caliph Haroun lived in its palaces and wandered at night through its streets and bazars."

"That's good news, doctor," replied Richard, in a more cheerful tone. "I'm ready for the coffee, come what may afterward."

The old Arab who had charge of the khan procured them some coffee. Their own stores supplied them with food. Breakfast over, they sallied forth from the khan, crossed the Tigris

over its bridge of boats, and inquired of a Turkish soldier whom they met for the house of the English consul.

Of course, the boys were very eager to see the ancient city which had so filled their imaginations with images of greatness like fairy-land, of matchless palaces and grand mosques with immense domes sparkling in the sun, and bazars filled with the treasures of the East, and crowded with rich merchants. Instead of this they beheld unpaved, muddy streets, narrow as lanes, and winding like cow-paths. Mean, low houses, built of yellow bricks, but no windows in their outer walls, stood on the sides of these lanes. No really fine buildings met the eye, no stately palaces, no grand mosques, but only here and there a dwarfed minaret, and a shabby, almost deserted, bazar. Even the famous gardens of the once mighty Haroun could not be traced. Before they reached the consul's house the spell with which the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" had invested Bagdad was broken. Instead of being delighted they were disgusted.

The Bagdad of their dreams had shared the fate of Aladdin's palace when the genii of the wonderful lamp removed it to a distant region; and the spectacle of a city once great and beautiful, but now sitting disrobed by the iron hand of war, by the rude hand of the Turk who destroys all he touches, and by the recent loss of commerce, had taken its place. They were, indeed, sadly disappointed. Richard vented his spleen by saying, in an almost surly tone:

"I wish I was on Boston Common, which is worth ten thousand Bagdads."

Their approach to the consul's residence, which stood in the midst of a garden on the bank of the Tigris, and was a pleasant old mansion, prevented any reply to this resentful speech. The consul received them courteously, and after reading the doctor's letters of introduction, insisted on their making his mansion their home during their stay. This unexpected invitation the doctor at first declined; but when the consul insisted with evident sincerity on being their host, he and the professor finally

consented, very much to the relief of the boys, who shrank from spending another night in a Bagdad khan.

Lady Blunt, in her narrative, describes this consul's residence as a beautiful old house, built round two large court-yards, and having a large frontage on the river. "It is," she says, "by far the pleasantest place in Bagdad. There is a delightful terrace overlooking the water, with an alley of old orange-trees and a kiosk, or summer-house, and steps leading down to a little dock where the consular boats are moored. Inside, the house is decorated in the Persian taste of the last century, with deep fretted ceilings, walls paneled in minute cabinet-work, sometimes inlaid with looking-glass, sometimes richly gilded. Only the dining-room is studiously English, its decorations forming a theme of admiration for the people of the city who come to pay their respects to the consul." No wonder, therefore, that, as soon as our travelers were left to themselves in one of its stately parlors, Richard gleefully exclaimed:

"After being in that black hole of a khan, I feel as if I had been let out of Dante's Purgatory and led into his Paradise. Hurrah for the English consul!"

"Hush, Dick," said Ronald; "the consul will think you are crazy if he hears you. I feel as glad as you do, and could easily fancy that we have lighted on Aladdin's palace; yet I don't think it best to act like a bedlamite."

"I am not mad, most noble Ronald," retorted Richard, in a tone of pretended mockery, "but only so glad that I feel as I suppose your friend Aladdin did, when the genii of the ring brought back his palace with his bride in it, after it had been carried away at the command of the cunning old fellow who had captured the genii of the lamp."

"Come, young gentlemen," said the professor, laughing, "I think I must cut short your learned disputation about nothing, and invite you to join me and my brother in a walk about the streets of this once famous city."

"I hear and obey, most noble professor,"

rejoined Richard, bowing with affected reverence.

“So do I, sir,” added Ronald, preparing to follow his teacher; “but I really believe that somebody must have given some hasheesh to my brother this morning.”

“He is only intoxicated with gladness,” replied the professor. “Perhaps the air of this old city will sober him. Let us go. The doctor is waiting for us in the court-yard.”

Our travelers now went out to walk about the city of the once mighty caliphs. The two boys, whose high anticipations had been already transformed into disappointments by what they had seen in the morning, could find no attractive or strange spectacles to excite their wonder. Indeed, they saw but little to attract them, besides the many-colored and Oriental costumes of the people, such as they had seen the evening before. Bagdad itself was but a dying city, situated in a swamp. Its old walls had been demolished a few years before by order of Midhat Pasha, its then governor. That

blundering Turk had, at great cost, also dug a huge canal to irrigate the lands around Bagdad. But his bungling engineers had so miscalculated the levels of the river and the land, that when the water from the river was let into the canal, it flooded the country and transformed the site of the city into a swampy island. Hence our travelers saw scarcely any thing to suggest its former glory. The only thing that really pleased the boys during their stroll was a crowd listening to an Arab story-teller in a coffee-shop. He was telling a story about Haroun-al-Raschid, which the doctor translated to them as they walked back to the consul's hospitable home, as follows :

“One night Haroun, the mighty caliph, was restless, and said to his attendants :

“‘I cannot sleep ; my heart is contracted. I know not what to do.’

“Mezrur, his executioner, who was present, laughed outright at the caliph's nervous fancy. His dangerous master, offended by his laughter, asked, in a sharp voice :

“‘Dost thou laugh at me, or art thou mad ?’

“ ‘No, by Allah, commander of the faithful!’ replied Mezzur. ‘I could not help it. It was the sudden thought of a man whom I saw yesterday amusing a crowd on the banks of the Tigris that made me laugh, for which I humbly beg your majesty’s pardon.’

“ ‘Bring him in here at once!’ cried the uneasy monarch.

“ Away went Mezzur in search of the wag. Having found the fellow, he said :

“ ‘Promise to give me two thirds of what you may receive, and I will take you to the caliph.’

“ After wrangling awhile over the proposal, the man gave his promise, and was led into the presence of the king.

“ ‘If you do not make me laugh,’ said al-Raschid, ‘I will strike you three times with this leathern bag.’

“ The funny fellow did his best to say humorous things, but could not bring even a smile to the caliph’s lips.

“ ‘Now, then,’ said Haroun, ‘you have deserved the beating.’

“Then seizing the bag, which was filled with pebbles, he gave the jester a blow which made him howl. Before he could repeat the blow, the discomfited wag begged permission to speak. It was given, and then he told of the bargain he had made with Mezzur, and prayed him to give the remaining blows to him. The second blow being given to Mezzur, he cried :

“‘O, prince of the faithful, one third is quite enough for me ; give him two thirds !’

“The humor of Mezzur calmed his master’s temper, and so tickled his fancy that he burst into a merry laugh, and dismissed both Mezzur and the wag with liberal gifts.”

This story amused the young travelers greatly. After their hearty laughter had subsided, the professor said :

“Now let me tell you an incident which illustrates the better side of Haroun’s self-contradictory character. To one of his great banquets he one day invited a blind poet, named Abu Atahiyeh. At the close of the feast he said to this man :

“ ‘Give us a description of the happiness and prosperity which we enjoy.’

“To this command Abu replied by singing :

“ ‘Right happy may thy life be made,
Safe in the lofty castle’s shade ;’

“ ‘Bravo !’ cried the caliph. The poem then continued :

“ ‘And every morn and eve, may all
Thy every slightest wish forestall.’

“ ‘Excellent !’ exclaimed the pleased monarch. Abu sang again :

“ ‘But when thy latest struggling sighs,
With rattlings in the breast arise,
Then shalt thou of a surety know
’Tis all deception here below.’

“This sudden presentation of a coming disenchantment and eclipse of all his glory moved the caliph to tears. El Fadhl, one of his secretaries, thinking perchance that his tears might be followed by a furious burst of passion, spoke sternly to the singer, saying :

“ ‘The commander of the faithful sent for

thee to amuse him, and thou hast only made him sad.'

"But the caliph was really moved, for the moment, to sober thought by the words of the blind poet, and he replied: 'Nay, leave him alone; he only saw that we were growing blind, and he did not wish to make us more so.'"

"I wonder he did not call Mezzur to cut off the poor fellow's head," observed Richard.

"Perhaps he would have done so," replied the professor, "if the song had not awakened the better side of his nature, and called into activity that sentimental piety for which at times he was remarkable. Besides, he was himself a poet, and always paid great deference to men of talent, and this may have also helped to keep his fiery temper in abeyance."

On their arrival at the consul's residence they were told that he was busy in his office, but would soon join them in the spacious apartment to which they were led by the servant. After seating themselves around the fire, which, as the weather was disagreeably cold, they found quite

comfortable, the boys made some rather uncomplimentary remarks on the caliph Haroun's whims. The doctor, hearing their opinions so freely expressed, said: "It is well for you, young gentlemen, that the caliph is a dead king. Were this his palace, and were he alive and within ear-shot of your talk, it is not unlikely that Mezrur would make each of you a head shorter than you are in less than five minutes. But let me give you another picture from his busy life which will show you that, with all his cruel whimsicalities, he could sometimes treat even a practical joker with leniency. Like most monarchs of his time, he had a court jester, with whom, in his hours of ease, he often had merry disputes. The name of this jester was Abu Nawwas. On one occasion the wag, having quoted the maxim, 'An excuse is often worse than the crime,' the caliph denied its truth. Then the jester said: 'I will convince your majesty of its truth before this night is over.' 'If you don't,' rejoined al-Raschid, grimly, 'I will cut off your head.'

"A little later the prince of the faithful entered his harem in a very surly mood. To his surprise he was greeted on its threshold with a kiss from a rough, bearded face. 'Bring me a light! Bring Mezrur, my executioner!' shouted the enraged caliph.

"The light being instantly brought, revealed the merry face of Abu Nawwas.

"'What on earth do you mean by such conduct?' demanded the caliph.

"'I humbly beg your majesty's pardon, but I thought it was your majesty's favorite wife,' answered the wag.

"'What!' shrieked Haroun, 'your excuse is worse than the crime.'

"'Just what I promised to prove,' said Abu Nawwas, fleeing from the apartment, closely followed by one of the imperial slippers."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Ronald. "Abu Nawwas was no fool. Yet I would prefer being the caliph's cook to filling the office of his jester. Jestings with such a king must have been like tossing and catching very sharp knives."

“Well, gentlemen, how do you like the ‘Abode of Peace,’ as Bagdad was named in the days of its former magnificence?” said the English consul, who now entered the room without being announced. He had caught the substance of Ronald’s remark, and it had suggested the words of his friendly greeting.

“Our young gentlemen here are entirely disenchanted by what they have seen of it,” replied the doctor, laughing. “They came expecting to find the Bagdad of the caliphate in the days of its glory. They do not find it, and it requires all the faith they have in me and their tutor to induce them to think that this is really the city where the so-called ‘good Haroun-al-Raschid’ once reigned in splendor and great glory.”

“They are not the first of modern travelers who have been disappointed with our poor Bagdad,” replied the consul, smiling. “But if you will walk to the dining-room and take some dinner, we will try to find something in Bagdad that may interest them to-morrow.”

After dinner the courteous consul led them

out to the terrace which overlooked the Tigris, saying, "It is quite mild this afternoon, and you may be interested in seeing somewhat of the Bagdad people on the river."

With this proposal they were, of course, well pleased. Following him through the walk, which was lined with rows of orange trees, they went down to the dock, where they saw a pretty little steam yacht with a number of boats securely moored. The water of the broad river was almost motionless, and numerous little round boats were skimming about upon the stately stream. After glancing at the lively scene a moment or two the impulsive Richard exclaimed:

"What queer looking boats those are! They look more like wash-tubs than real boats."

The consul told him that they were not made like English or American boats, but were constructed of reeds coated with bitumen, and that being very light they answered the purpose of the people very well, as one could see by their swift movements. "I think," he said, "that

they are quite as useful to their owners as the canoes of your Indians are to them."

The consul's yacht, which had just steamed up the river, had not yet had her fires put out. It was still light enough for a short excursion; and the boys gladly accepted the offer of their liberal-minded host to go on board and steam a few miles on. The trim yacht was speedily prepared, and having passed the bridge of boats, which was just above the consul's residence, she glided past the eastern bank of the river sufficiently near to give them a good view of its principal buildings.

"That is the governor's palace," said the consul, pointing to a mean-looking structure just above the bridge.

"That a palace!" exclaimed Richard. "I don't see how any one except a jester, like Abu Nawwas, could call that rough-looking house a palace."

"Perhaps they keep the splendor that is supposed to belong to a palace inside," replied Ronald, laughing. "See those richly dressed

fellows lolling and smoking on their divans just within those windows!"

"Those gentlemen compose the household of the pasha, who is the most conspicuous personage you see in that group of smokers," observed the consul, as the yacht glided past the limits of the palace grounds.

"Well, here is something funny!" said Ronald. "It looks like the half of a mosque. You can see into the very recess of its dome, which looks as if some genii had cut off its outer half and carried it off to the home of the Afreets."

"That mosque," said the consul, "has been undermined by the river, which is the genii which has gulped down about one half of the original structure, and will, if the lazy Turks do not bestir themselves, swallow the remainder after a few years.. You see its many little chambers for prayer all open to wind and rain. Once it was a grand edifice, as you may judge from the colored cupolas and minarets which still remain."

Presently the attention of our party was called to a pine-shaped cone of snowy whiteness which rose into the air on the western bank of the stream. "That pillar will interest you, young gentlemen," said the consul, as he pointed toward it. "It is part of the tomb of Zobeide, the favorite wife of Haroun - al - Raschid, of whom you have read in your 'Arabian Nights' Tales.'"

After gazing intently awhile on this monument to the memory of a lady whose very name quickened their imaginations, and called up a crowd of romantic associations, Richard nudged his brother's arm, and whispered, "I say, Ronald, we can brag about that when we get back to Boston, for we shall be able to say to our set, 'We have seen what none of you fellows ever saw, and most likely never will see—Queen Zobeide's tomb!'"

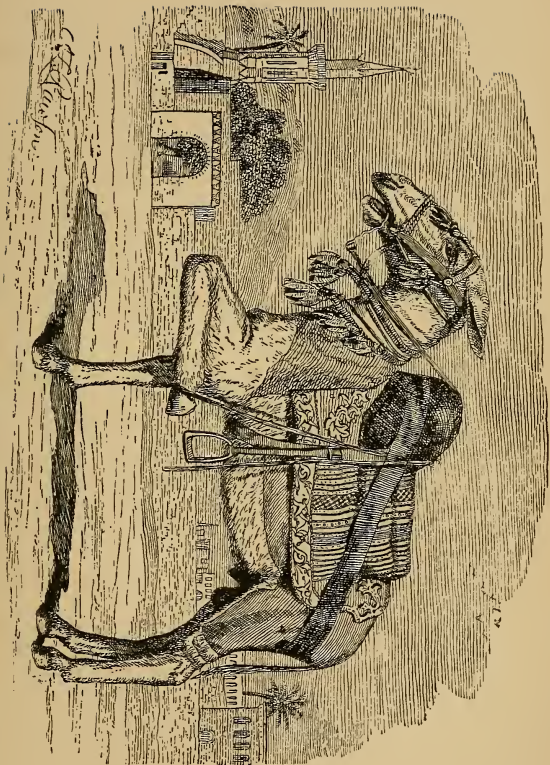
Back of and beyond the half-ruined mosque and the pasha's palace, our party saw, between the palm-trees, long lines of mud-built houses, and on both banks of the river swarms of

Arabs, mud hovels screened by yellow mats, and patient oxen working the water-wheels, which creaked and groaned dismally at every turn. In sailing back to the home of their host they saw, near the bridge of boats, crowds of Turks and other residents of Bagdad, in their gay costumes, and were especially attracted by the fine large white asses on which many riders were mounted.

"I never saw a white donkey before," said Ronald.

"White asses are highly esteemed in the East," replied the consul. "Their owners often dye their tails and ears bright-red. They also spot their sides with the same color for the use of the priests and men of the law. In the Book of Judges, addressing such dignitaries, Deborah says, in her triumphal song, 'Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment,' etc. Thus, you see, that the white ass is an animal which has long been held in honor by Oriental nations."

The arrival of the yacht at her moorings



Alexandrian Donkey.



at sunset put an end to further conversation about the white ass, and the boys, after reaching the consul's parlor, finding the gentlemen inclined to talk upon political questions, in which they were little interested, took occasion to retire early to their chambers.

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL TO BAGDAD.

“I WONDER why they named this place Bagdad,” said Ronald to the professor, the next evening, after a conversation with Richard about the caliphs.

“That is a disputed question,” Mr. Benedict replied. “Persian writers say that it was originally founded by their kings, who named it Bagh Dad. Bagh signified a garden, and Dad was the name of an idol once worshiped on the site of the new city. Hence, according to the Persians, the meaning of its name, was, the Garden of Dad.”

“Dad!” exclaimed Richard, laughing; “what a name for a god! It is almost as flat as daddy—daddy’s garden. Pshaw! But even that would be good enough for it now, though it is more a swamp than a garden to-day.”

The professor smiled at Richard's nonsensical remark, and said: "But the Mohammedans claim that Bagdad was first built by the great Caliph Almanzor in the year 762, and that it was named after Dad, a Christian hermit, who had lived on the spot and was its only inhabitant. Which is the correct tradition no one can now decide. But after Almanzor had built and enriched it with beautiful mosques and stately palaces he called it Dar al Salem, the City of Peace. The caliphs, his successors, reigned over it five hundred years, and then it was captured by the Tartars."

"But were those caliphs such great fellows as the 'Arabian Nights' say Haroun-al-Raschid was?" asked Ronald.

"No doubt they kept a very magnificent court, and abounded in what Milton calls 'barbaric pearls and gold.' Gibbon says, that when one of them, named Almamon, was married, no fewer than a thousand pearls of the largest size were showered on the head of the bride, and a vast amount of money was scattered among the

people who crowded to see the magnificence displayed by their king."

"That crowd had a grand scramble that day," said Richard. "Such fellows as Aladdin of the lamp must have had a jolly time. I wish that caliph would appear again while we are here. I should like to try for my share of his riches."

Without noticing Richard's trifling comment, the professor proceeded to say: "Let me tell you how the caliph Moctader received an ambassador from the Greek emperor in the year 917. He assembled one hundred and sixty thousand soldiers, splendidly equipped, in the streets and around the gardens of his palace. Thousands of white and black servants, slaves, porters, and state officers richly dressed, with their belts glittering with gold and gems, stood waiting to do his will. Costly carpets covered the floors of his palace; gorgeous tapestry adorned its walls. Among the wonderful spectacles displayed was a tree of gold and silver with eighteen spreading branches and numerous smaller boughs on which were leaves of the same precious metals.

Gold and silver birds, in great variety of species and plumage, were perched on this tree, and, by means of unseen machinery, were made to warble forth the notes natural to each. Through all this magnificent array the astonished ambassador was led by the vizier to the throne of the proud caliph."

"Do you suppose, professor, that all this was really done by the caliph, or was the scene invented by some Arabian poet?"

"When you come to read Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' you will find that he accepts it as literal history on the authority of Abulfeda, the Moslem historian. It may be somewhat colored, perhaps, yet I presume it is substantially true. In the time of their highest vigor and military glory the caliphs, both in the east and west, that is, in Asia and Europe, were much given to magnificent display. When you read Washington Irving's 'Tales of the Alhambra,' and the history of the Moors in Spain, you will learn how richly the Spanish caliphs adorned their palaces.

Their historians tell with what lavish expenditure Abdalrahman III. constructed the city, palaces, and gardens of Zehra, upon which he spent fifteen millions of dollars. The walls of his hall of audience were incrustcd with gold and pearls, and a great basin in the center with curious and costly figures of birds and animals. In a lofty pavilion of the gardens one of these basins and fountains was replenished, not with water, but with the purest quicksilver. And when this proud prince marched out to battle, "he was attended by a guard of twelve thousand horsemen, whose belts and cimeters were studded with gold."

"Was not all that a specimen of Milton's 'barbaric pearls and gold,' professor?" inquired Ronald.

"Certainly there was a barbaric tone of display in all those Arabian caliphs which the then imperfect European civilization was not itself sufficiently refined to correct. Cruel and fierce as they were, yet they were not entirely without a serious side to their characters. This splen-

dor-loving Abdalrahman saw the vanity of his own magnificence as clearly as King Solomon did the insufficiency of his vast wealth to satisfy the mind. The caliph left a remarkable document in his closet, which shows that even he had learned to weigh the world in the scales of wisdom. It was found after his death. I think I can give it you if you wish to hear it."

The lads expressed their desire to know what it was, and the professor recited it as follows: "In that paper the caliph said, 'I have now reigned about fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honors, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot; they amount to FOURTEEN—O man! place not thy confidence in this present world.'"

"If Abdalrahman wrote the truth about him-

self in that paper," said Richard, in his usual light tone of speaking, "I don't think all his splendid show amounted to much. Only fourteen happy days in fifty years! Pshaw! I'd rather be a Boston school-boy than a caliph, if that's all he could get out of a caliph's life."

"But you forget, Richard," observed the more thoughtful Ronald, "that the caliph was not a Christian. I should think that a Christian king might get more happiness than that out of a long reign."

The professor said that, "no doubt, a Christian king might find at least as much happiness in reigning justly and wisely over a nation as a Christian merchant or manufacturer might find amid the perplexities of business. In both cases the degree of happiness turns on the motive of the man. If the king reigned in the fear and love of God, he would find happiness. If he reigned to gratify his own self-will, his life would be barren of bliss. The same is true of men in all positions. God blesses those who do his will; those who do their own

will he leaves to get what they can out of life without his blessing. And these are sure to find the world mere husks, which, however freely eaten, leave the soul hungry, empty, unsatisfied." Having uttered these just opinions the professor added: "Young gentlemen, it is getting late. Let us go to our rooms."

The next morning, under the guidance of the courteous consul, our party went out to get a further view of the city once so magnificent, but now so ruinous and poor. He first conducted them to the terrace running along the banks of the Tigris in front of his residence. As stated before, it was ornamented with rows of orange-trees, and gave them a fine view of the turbid stream which flowed in sullen majesty at their feet, but which, as the consul remarked, not infrequently overflows its broken banks, and inundates parts of the city and of the country around it.

"Why does not the government keep yonder decayed embankments in repair?" inquired Doctor Benedict.

“The Turk repairs nothing. He destroys, but does not build nowadays. He belongs to a race which has lost its energies, and seems to be waiting hopelessly for the hour of its approaching death.”

The consul, after this reply to the doctor's question, told them that in other days the banks of both the Tigris and the Euphrates were kept in order by the Arab tribe of the Montefik. On the death of its sheikh one of the dependent tribes refused to obey his son, and left the work assigned it undone. Ajel, the young sheikh, went to the tent of the rebel, and said to him, “Go with your men and repair those broken dams!” The chief proudly refused. Turning to his own followers, Ajel said, “Go to work and drive this rebel into the earth!” His men seized the disobedient chief, threw him on the ground, and, driving a stake through his body, buried him in the foundation of the embankment, which they then proceeded to build up.”

“That young sheikh was cruel,” said Rich-

ard, "but I like him because he showed real grit. I like such spunky fellows, who, having rights, know how to maintain them."

The gentlemen smiled at Richard's spirited remark. The consul laughed outright, playfully remarking, "It's a pity, young gentleman, that your father was not an Arab sheikh. In that case you might have become a thorn in the side of the hateful and hated Turk"—a remark under which Richard winced, but not knowing exactly whether it was a reproof or a compliment he made no reply.

As they walked leisurely along the terrace toward the interior of Bagdad, the doctor remarked that the spirited conduct of the young sheikh, Ajel, reminded him of a still younger Arab lad, mentioned by Mr. Layard in his account of his visit to the mounds of Babylon. The explorer found the aged governor of Hillah, a town standing close to the ruins of that once mighty city, sick with asthma, and unable to attend to business. To Layard's surprise, the governor's son, a boy under four-

teen years of age, received him with the dignity and decorum of an adult prince. He was a noble-looking lad, with black sparkling eyes and a bright olive complexion. He wore the long silken robes of a town Arab, with the fringed keffich, or head-kerchief, of a Bedouin falling over his shoulders. After hearing Mr. Layard's statements and plans, he showed himself very friendly, and used to call upon him with a crowd of secretaries, slaves, and attendants, and greet him with the gravity of a man and the courtesy of a gentleman. His salutation of Mr. Layard was:

"We trust that it has pleased God to preserve your excellency's health. Our town is yours as well as our house. Our harem begs your excellency's acceptance of some milk and francolins. May we show that we are your slaves by ordering our troops to accompany you on your ride? Your person is more precious to us than our eyes, and there are evil men abroad in the desert," etc.

This precocious boy seemed to have all the

affairs of the governorship in his hands, and to manage them with a vigor and judgment worthy of a man of mature years. Mr. Layard esteemed him very highly.

By the time the doctor had finished this illustration of premature manliness in an Arab boy, the consul had led our party to the foot of the tallest minaret still standing in the half-forsaken streets. From its summit they could overlook the whole space still covered by the city and far out on the desert plain by which it is surrounded. But they saw nothing to admire. It seemed as if the angel of desolation had spread his dark wings over its ancient colleges, mosques, palaces, and gardens, defacing all their beauty, breathing decay upon their walls, and crumbling their very foundations into dust. And when they were told that the minaret upon which they were standing was the place of execution for criminals, who were cast headlong from its summit and dashed to death by their fall on the stones beneath, they shuddered. Ronald looked somewhat pale. Shrink-

ing from a spot so allied to death, he said to the professor :

“Please, sir, let us go! I begin to feel as you told us yesterday Lady Blunt did when she wrote, ‘Our first thought on arriving at Bagdad was how to get out of it.’ For my part I prefer a week in our dear old Boston to a life-time in this miserable old city.”

This outburst of boyish disgust was greeted with a burst of laughter from the three gentlemen. The professor replied to it, by saying, “I am afraid you wont enjoy reading your ‘Arabian Nights’ again, Master Ronald. Your recollections of the Bagdad of to-day will spoil all that is said in its pages about the Bagdad of the past.”

“I’ll burn my copy of that book when I reach home, see if I don’t!” exclaimed the boy. “If it hadn’t been for those stories I should never have been foolish enough to wish to come to Bagdad. And now I don’t care how soon I get out of it.”

While Ronald was making this passionate re-

mark the consul and the doctor began to descend the stairs of the minaret. The rest of the party followed them. Before returning to the consul's mansion they walked through the bazars. These structures were once so crowded with merchants, and so rich in merchandise, as to be a spectacle of wealth and splendor; but as seen by our travelers, they wore an air of neglect and desolation. There was little doing in them. Still, their dullness was somewhat relieved by the varied dresses of the Jews, Arabs, Turks, and Europeans, who still frequented them for the purposes of trade. Some of their dresses were gay and all were odd, and though the boys had seen most of them the day before, they yet attracted their attention and excited, if not their admiration, yet their wonder and surprise, that men should wear garments which to American conceptions seemed more fit for masquerades than for places of trade and business.

While the doctor went out in the afternoon of that day to make arrangements for their

departure, the boys asked the professor many questions concerning the causes which led to the fall of Bagdad from its ancient magnificence. "Please to tell us," said Ronald, "how those rich and mighty caliphs, who once made it so rich and beautiful, came to lose their wealth and power."

"You know," replied Mr. Benedict, "that kings who live in luxury, and can indulge their passions without hinderance, are apt to form habits which weaken them both in body and mind. After a time their sons, by inheriting their vices, become feeble-minded, vain, and unfit to govern or to defend their throne. It was so with the caliphs. Many of them, despite their cruelty, were vigorous, and even wise rulers and great soldiers, like one of the sons of Ali, the grandson of Mohammed, who united in himself the devout character of a Moslem saint and the military prowess of a brave soldier. To illustrate his religious feelings we are told that, while he was at dinner one day, a slave dropped a dish of scalding soup

on his person. The unlucky but quick-witted slave fell upon his face before his master, and, quoting from the Koran, said :

“‘Paradise is for those who command their anger.’

“‘I am not angry,’ replied the son of Ali.

“‘And for those who pardon offenses,’ added the slave.

“‘I pardon your offense,’ rejoined the son of Ali.

“‘And for those who return good for evil,’ said the slave.

“‘I give you your liberty and four hundred pieces of silver,’ responded the pious follower of the prophet.

“Like this man and your favorite Haroun many of the early caliphs were strong and sensible rulers ; but at last a caliph, named Mostasem, sat on their throne, at the time when a Tartar king, named Hulakoo, a grandson of that famous scourge of the nations, Genghis Khan, invaded his empire at the head of his army of Moguls. Instead of taking the field

at the head of his armies, Mostasem spent his time feasting and drinking in his harem. When Hulakoo sent an ambassador to his court requiring him to become his tributary, he sent this stupidly vain reply :

“ ‘On the divine decree is founded the throne of the sons of Abbas, and their foes shall surely be destroyed in this world and in the next. Who is this Hulakoo that dares to rise against them? If he be desirous of peace, let him instantly depart from the sacred territory, and perhaps he may obtain from our clemency the pardon of his fault.’ ”

“What a foolish fellow!” exclaimed Richard.

“Yes, he was foolish, and unfortunately he had fools for his counselors. His vizier encouraged his folly by saying, ‘Thou art right, O king of the faithful, for if these barbarians were even now in the city our women and children, standing on the terraces, would be sufficient to overwhelm them with stones.’ ”

“Well, if Mostasem believed such nonsense as that, he deserved to lose the throne which

once belonged to the mighty Haroun," said Ronald.

"And he did lose it," answered the professor. "Hulakoo replied to his message by leading his fierce Moguls to Bagdad and besieging it. After two months they poured through the breaches they had made in its walls, sacked it with great slaughter of its defenders, and put an end to the race of the caliphs, for the pitiless Hulakoo ordered Mostasem to be put to death."

"Did the Tartars hold Bagdad long?" inquired Ronald.

"About three hundred years. Tamerlane then drove them out. After that it had various masters and suffered much from many wars, until, in 1638, it fell into the hands of the Turks, who signalized their victory by the cruel massacre by torch-light of most of its inhabitants after they had capitulated. The Turks have held it ever since, but its commerce has been pretty much destroyed by the new routes taken by steam-ships from Europe to India. Its rich merchants have forsaken its bazars and have

gone to Bussorah, a growing city on the River of the Arabs,' which is formed by the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Should a railroad be built down the Valley of the Euphrates, Bagdad will soon become a forsaken city, even if some stronger people than the Turks should become its masters."

"What savages those Turks were, and still are, I guess, when they have the power!" exclaimed Richard.

After this conversation our travelers began their preparations for quitting Bagdad on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOME BY WAY OF DAMASCUS.

THE doctor, who managed all the traveling arrangements of our party, met with several petty vexations in making preparations for their departure from Bagdad. For various reasons nearly all their servants left them, and it was difficult to replace them satisfactorily with others. But after a delay of two days their resolute leader had all things ready, and, bidding adieu to their generous host, they started to retrace their steps from the once proud Queen of the Tigris to the banks of the Euphrates at Seglawiyeh. There they overtook a caravan which had left Bagdad the day before bound for Damascus. With this caravan they concluded to travel up the river to a town named Ana, and thence across the Desert to Damascus, the most ancient city in the world.

Their journey along this route was more tiresome than their ride from Scanderoon through Aleppo to the Arab camp, and thence to Bagdad. The slowness with which the caravan traveled, its daily routine, unvaried by adventures of any moment, and only enlivened at times by apprehensions of attacks from predatory Arab bands, with the heat of the approaching spring weather, made their life for some twenty days very tiresome and monotonous. Whenever the neighborhood of their camping-ground promised a fox to hunt or a supply of game for their larder, the doctor took the boys with him, and being, as you know, a skilled sportsman, he rarely failed, with their aid, to replenish their game-bag. Hence a minute account of the daily details of their journey would not be of much interest to the reader. If, therefore, he will imagine them arrived at the western limit of the Desert, riding with their servants, their muleteers, and their faithful Hassan, on his yet unwearied camel, he may learn from their conversation what impression

was made upon them when the towers and minarets of Damascus first met their vision.

After leaving the sandy soil and stony ridges of the almost barren Desert they found themselves entering a vast plain, green as emerald and apparently boundless, except where the "steep sides of Lebanon" rose in the distance like "the promontories of a mountainous coast stretching out into a motionless sea." As they trotted briskly ahead of the toiling caravan along the road into this garden-like plain, the professor stimulated the curiosity of his youthful pupils by saying :

"We shall soon catch our first glance of a city of which a traveler, named Maundrell, once said : 'There is no place in the world which can promise to the beholder at a distance a greater voluptuousness.' "

To this remark the doctor added : "In saying that, Mr. Maundrell only echoed a sentiment common to most Europeans and Americans who see this ancient city for the first time. Even the Turks have a tradition that when their prophet, standing on one of the hills of Leba-

non, beheld its ravishing beauty, he paused and said: 'There is but one paradise designed for man, and for my part I am resolved not to take mine in this world.' Then turning his horse's head, he instantly rode away, lest if he entered its walls he should be enticed by its delights to neglect the stern duties of his prophetic mission."

Richard remarked that he doubted whether the prophet ever uttered such words or did such a foolish deed. He thought the story was all very well as a legend, but he could not see how the beautiful situation of a city could make it dangerous to any man's virtue, much less to that of a prophet who had great wars on his hands.

Ronald thought that even a prophet might be so enchanted by a beautiful city as to desire to make it a place of rest from the battles and bloodshed of his previous life. Then, while looking intently before him, he suddenly exclaimed: "See! how beautiful yonder gardens appear."

“And, beyond them, see the lovely city, ‘the Eye of the East,’ as a Roman emperor is said to have called it,” exclaimed the doctor. “There it stands like a queen clothed in robes of beauty and adorned with glistening jewels.”

Yes, there was Damascus, sitting in stately glory in the midst of a wilderness of gardens. Its white houses, its castles, its mosques with their domes and minarets, gleamed brightly in the clear Syrian sun, and our travelers, as by a common instinct, reined in their horses and paused to feast their eyes on the peerless beauty of a prospect which has compelled the admiration of men through the ages.

Such phrases as “How grand!” “How beautiful!” “What a glorious city!” “Damascus is worth ten thousand Bagdads!” etc., seemed too poor and feeble to express the enthusiastic feelings of the boys. Richard at length forced a merry laugh from the doctor and the professor by saying:

“Well, I used to think Boston looked fine with her queenly State-house dome on Beacon

Street, but Damascus beats Boston. Yet, after all, though Damascus is very fine to look at, outside, I guess Boston is the place to live in."

After the laugh, occasioned by this frank declaration of Richard's love for Boston had subsided, our travelers rode gently on toward the "wilderness of gardens" which surround the city on every side. Tangled shrubs, with gorgeous roses blooming among their branches, fruits and flowers, fountains and rivulets of living water, met their eyes, while the sweet murmurings of gently flowing streams delighted their ears. Besides these beauties of nature and cultivation they found themselves, as they drew nearer the city, among swarms of Syrian peasants, Arabs of the Desert, Turks, and Jews riding on mules, horses, asses, and camels, or trudging on foot toward the city gates. These various figures gave animation to the scene, and the delight of our boy-travelers was like an overflowing stream, and Richard repeatedly cried out, enthusiastically:

“This is the jolliest sight we have seen since we left home!”

Ronald, habitually thoughtful, said less, though he appreciated what he saw as highly as his brother. The sight of Damascus had brought to his mind one of the grandest scenes described in the New Testament. And when Richard rallied him because of his grave looks, he replied :

“I have been thinking that perhaps we are not far from the spot where Paul saw something grander than yonder city, and where he heard a voice which filled him with an awful fear, and moved him to become a disciple of our blessed Lord.

The professor replied to this remark by pointing in a certain direction, and saying :

“There is a church and convent standing at a considerable distance from us, which tradition affirms to be on the exact place where Saul beheld the resplendent glory of the living Jesus, and heard him speak the words which won him to his cause. But tradition, unsupported by

evidence, is a very unreliable witness. Most likely he was much nearer the city than where the church stands when Jesus spoke to him. But Saul was not a man given to note things which were not essential. To him the *fact* that Christ actually spoke to him was every thing. The precise spot upon which he fell terror-stricken at that mighty voice was not important enough to be so described or pointed out as to become known to the primitive Church. When the Christian Church began to substitute superstition for truth, and outward observances for inward religion, she then began to attach importance to the scenes of the great events which belonged to her early history."

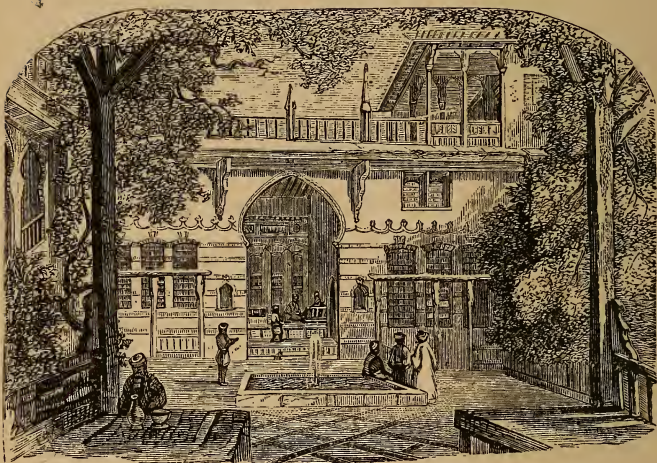
After riding a little farther the doctor observed that the waters which they saw and heard gurgling through the gardens were the "streams from Lebanon," the "rivers of Damascus," and the outflow of the river Abana, which Naaman, the leper, preferred to the waters of Israel. The Greeks called it the "river of gold;" and it has been well said that it is the "life of Da-

mascus," since, without it, the fertile plains and romantic gardens, amid which the city stands, would soon be transformed into a part of the desert from which it has been redeemed by its refreshing and fertilizing waters constantly descending from the cool recesses of the mountains of Lebanon.

Further conversation soon became difficult, owing to the increasing number of persons and animals on the road. Therefore, following the lead of the doctor, they proceeded slowly toward the city along streets which, being embowered with trees, seemed, as a recent writer has well said, "more like the green country lanes of England than city streets." Gardens, groves of poplar trees, with olives, walnuts, pomegranates, and apricots, met the eye continually. Streams flowed by the road side, and water bubbled from many a fountain, making a scene which Ronald declared to be a perfect fairy-land.

Yet in spite of all this freshness and beauty, the boys were not a little glad when they found themselves in the pleasant rooms of the great

rambling Damascus Hotel, kept by a Greek named Dimitri. Their windows opened on a spacious court, cooled and enlivened by a plashing fountain. Throwing themselves on a soft divan, they yawned with weariness and rejoiced



COURT OF HOUSE IN DAMASCUS.

together over the fact that their long horseback rides across the Desert were at an end.

“I am glad that Dr. Benedict is going to sell our horses and get rid of our muleteers and servants,” said Richard. “I have had so much

riding horseback this winter that I don't care if I never get into a saddle again."

"But how are we to reach Beirut, where we are to take a steamer, if the doctor sells our horses?" asked Ronald.

"I heard the doctor say that there is a splendid macadamized road from here to Beirut, and that French diligences run over it every day," replied Richard. "Wont it be jolly to ride like civilized fellows again?"

Ronald thought it would be a very enjoyable change after their long and tedious journey from Bagdad, which, on account of their being in the saddle every day, without those intervals of rest they took in the Arab camp on their journey from Aleppo to Bagdad, had become very tiresome. Both boys were fairly sick of desert travel with a caravan.

"Letters! letters!" exclaimed the professor, entering the room at this moment with a packet of letters from home, which he was sorting as he approached.

"Hurrah!" responded Richard, springing

from the divan and clutching his share of the packet with nervous haste.

They had received letters from home while at Bagdad, but these brought them much later news from their parents and friends at Boston. Of course, they seized them with eagerness, and as the letters contained nothing but good news they were read with intense delight. Their effect on the two boys was to fill them with such desire to see their beloved parents and to mingle with their school friends, that for the remainder of the day all further talk about Damascus and the Desert was suspended. Boston and their friends in and about Boston were in the ascendant until night, and then they became the inspiration of their dreams.

The next morning at the breakfast table the doctor told them that they had two days to spend in Damascus, and after that, he said, they would ride by diligence in one day to Beirut, less than fifty miles distant, where they would take a steam-ship, cross the Mediterranean Sea to a European port, and sail thence, without

further delay, to their native land. When they had eaten their morning meal the doctor rose and said :

“I have my hands full of business to-day, young gentlemen, and while I am busy disposing of our horses and camp equipage, I must leave you to the care of my brother, who will show you the *lions* of Damascus.”

“Lions! Do they have *lions* in Damascus?” asked Richard, with surprise both in his looks and tones.

“Ha, ha, ha! Why, Dick, don’t you know that things peculiar to a city and worth seeing are called lions?” replied Ronald, laughing merrily at his brother’s dullness.

“You have me there, Ronnie,” replied Richard, slightly blushing; “but what is there worth seeing in Damascus?”

“I really don’t know,” rejoined Ronald, “though I should like to see the street where Ananias lived, which Luke says, in the Acts of the Apostles, was named ‘Straight.’ Then there is the house in which Ananias lived, and the

window in the city wall through which Saul was let down in a basket. I should like to see them."



STREET CALLED STRAIGHT.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Richard. "Do you think that the house of Ananias, which was standing nearly nineteen hundred years ago,

is still in existence? Why not extend your thoughts still farther back, and inquire where you can find the house of Eliezer, who lived in Damascus before he became steward of the great sheikh, Abraham, the patriarch of the Jews?"

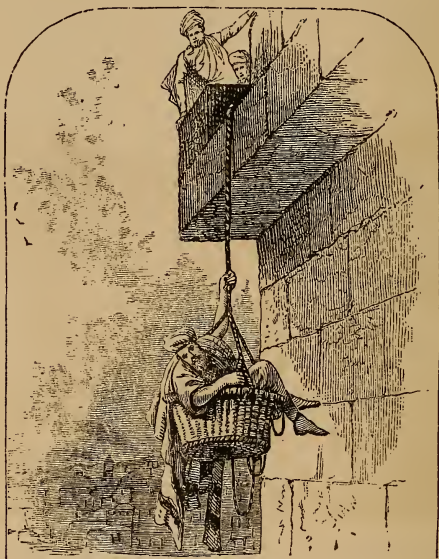
"O, I forgot! or, rather, I spoke without thinking," replied Ronald. Then addressing Professor Benedict, he asked, "But they do show people the house of Ananias and the window in the wall, don't they, sir?"

The professor said they did, and then, on being informed that a guide whom the doctor had engaged was in waiting, they left the hotel and proceeded first to the street called "Straight."

"Do you call this street straight?" asked Richard, after they had passed through a street, which ran for about a mile from the eastern to the western gate of the city. "If this is straight, then a ram's horn is straight."

"It was both a straight and a broad noble avenue, with rows of pillars on each side, when Luke wrote," the professor said; "but the houses since built, and rebuilt perhaps several times,

have not been kept on the lines which once bounded it. It is, as you say, crooked enough now to claim a place in the labyrinth of streets which this old city contains. But here we are,

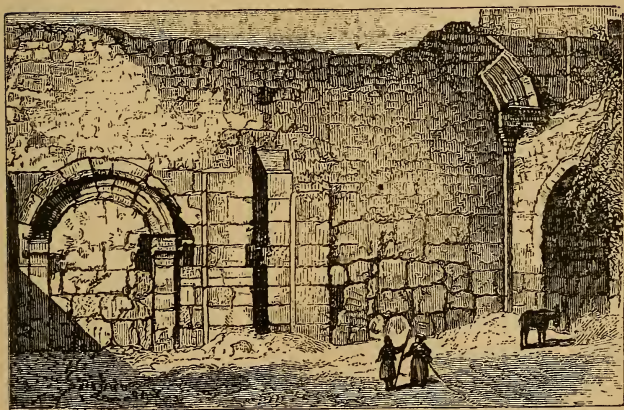


SAUL'S ESCAPE FROM A WINDOW.

our guide informs me, at the house of Ananias.”

Neither the professor nor the boys believed that Ananias ever lived in the house pointed out as that good man's abode, albeit they found one

or two devotees devoutly kneeling in the cellar, which the guide assured them was actually a part of the building in which Saul found the friend who restored him to sight, and taught him to see by faith the mighty Being who had spoken to him on the plain without the



EAST GATE OF DAMASCUS.

city. They were equally in doubt about the identity of the window in the wall from which Saul was let down, and to the top of which they mounted.

While viewing the suburbs of the city from

the top of one of its gates, the professor was led by the questionings of the boys to talk of the conquest of Damascus by the Saracens in A. D. 644, more than twelve hundred years ago. "It was at that time," he said, "a city of the Roman Empire. The Moslems were invading Syria. Heraclius, the Roman emperor, sent twenty thousand men to drive back the Arabian invaders, and to protect Damascus. These veteran troops met the Moslems at Aiznadin, and were sadly beaten. The victors then marched to Damascus, which, being well defended by ramparts and warlike engines, was not to be easily captured. Not having the battering-rams needed to overthrow its strong walls, the Saracen commander spread his army round about it with a purpose of taking it by assault or treachery, if occasion offered, or to reduce it to submission by starvation. Before each of its seven gates the warlike Arabs spread their tents, and watched to cut off supplies from without, and to resist sallies from the troops from within. Then fear, dismay, and despair began to reign over the doomed city.

“There was, however, one heroic Greek within its walls. He stirred the courage of the people, and rallied them to make a sally upon the enemy. To rouse their enthusiasm and inspire them with confidence he erected a lofty crucifix over the principal gate of the city. To this crucifix the bishop and clergy marched in solemn procession. They placed a copy of the Bible before the image of our Lord, and then prayed the Son of God to give victory to their arms.

“After this superstitious reverence before the crucifix, they began the battle. The brave Greek, who had moved the Damascenes to fight, was a superior archer. Planting himself on the ramparts, armed with his bow, he shot many of the boldest Saracens. One of his victims was named Arban. When he fell his wife, who had followed him to the field, folded his expiring form to her breast and said :

“‘Happy art thou, my dear. Thou art gone to the Lord, who first joined us together, and then parted us asunder. I will avenge thy death, and endeavor to the utmost of my power to come to

the place where thou art, because I love thee. I have dedicated myself to the service of God.'

"She next proceeded, without further sign of grief, to bury her husband with the customary rites. This done, she grasped her bow, which she had been trained to use in her youth, and sought a spot from whence she could reach the noble Greek archer whose arrow had killed her husband. Her first arrow struck down the standard-bearer of the Christian army. Her second pierced the eye of the heroic Greek, who stubbornly refused to quit the rampart, but had his eye dressed on the spot from whence he continued to direct the battle until night put an end to the terrible strife. But his heroism was useless. The defenders of the city were disheartened, and, knowing that they could not long resist the fierce assaults of the Saracens, they made terms by which the crescent flag of Islam soon floated on their towers, where it still floats in haughty defiance of that Christian civilization which is slowly but surely destroying the life of Mohammedanism."

After quitting the battle-scarred ramparts of the city our party wandered about the bewildering wilderness of streets of which Damascus is made up. They saw very little to excite their interest except in the workshops of the skillful artificers in brass, copper, steel, and jewelry, and in the cool, richly furnished bazars. In one of the former Richard selected a suit of ancient armor, which, said he, "will look first-rate when stood up in our front hall. I know father will like it." In the latter Ronald selected a Persian rug, which, said he, "I wish to take home to my mother as a memento of our trip to Bagdad." The professor, approving their choice, purchased these articles and ordered them to be packed for transportation to America.

Their impressions of Damascus, after their first day's ramble about its streets, were not inaptly expressed by Richard that evening when the doctor asked him, "What think you of Damascus?"

"Not much," replied the lad. "It is a gloomy, dirty, musty old place, with streets as

irregular as cow-paths, lots of mean houses, and only a few that are worth looking at. It is not half as bad as Bagdad, though."

"But we haven't been into the great mosque yet, nor over the citadel, nor inside the tomb of the mighty Saladin," said Ronald. "For my part, I like Damascus, not because it is beautiful inside, for it isn't, but because it is so ancient, and makes things of which I have read in the Bible seem so real. Why, when our guide told us that the hospital for lepers stands on the site of Naaman's house, I could almost fancy I saw that Hebrew maid who sent her lord to Elisha, coming out of the hospital door to greet him on his return home!"

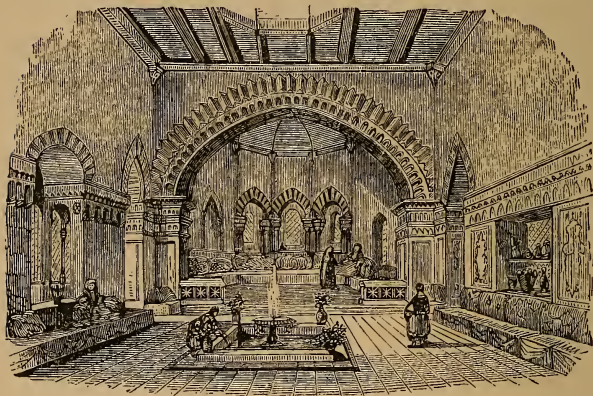
The doctor smiled approval of Ronald's appreciation of spots made sacred to him by their association with events of the olden time, and, turning to Richard, he said: "I suppose, Master Richard, you will not admit the claim of the Damascenes, that the body of Adam was formed out of the red earth which is found in their lovely gardens?"

“No, *sir*,” replied the boy, with emphasis. “I believe in our Bible, but I think the people here are pretty much what the Athenians were when Paul said to them, ‘I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.’”

“That’s pretty good for a lad of your age,” said the doctor, “and it isn’t far from the truth. These Damascenes, both Christians and Moslems, are, indeed, the slaves of superstition, and think more of alleged sacred localities than of the spiritual relations and teachings of the facts which they love to commemorate.”

The next day our party visited the Great Mosque, originally a heathen temple, then a church in which good men worshiped the living Christ through many ages, and in which it may be reasonably hoped the voice of the Christian will again be heard before many years. Beneath its dome they were shown an inclosure beneath which, as superstition teaches, is the head of John the Baptist. Standing near the mosque they saw the tomb of the great Saladin, whose military genius proved more than a match for the heroic

courage and fiery valor of Richard the Lion-hearted. This mausoleum excited Richard's enthusiasm, and moved him to tell of Saladin's



INTERIOR OF GREAT MOSQUE.

chivalric generosity in sending wine cooled with snow to his sick and equally chivalric adversary ; and of the effect of King Richard's courage on the people's minds being so great as to make the mothers of the country quiet their little ones with the mention of his terrible name ; and to cause Syrian men to say to a starting horse, "Dost thou think King Richard is in that bush ?"

“Well, Master Richard,” said the professor, after the boy had finished his heroic speech, “if coming to Damascus does you no other benefit, it has at least led you to call up your historic reading. Possibly our whole journey may contribute hereafter to an increase of your interest in the history of the powerful nations whose armies once traversed the ground over which we have passed so peacefully since we landed at Scanderoon, nearly three months ago.”

Having spent two days in sight-seeing, our party left Damascus. Their ride in a French diligence over the splendid road, built by French engineers a few years ago, between Damascus and Beirut, was without incident. Ronald said of it:

“This is easier riding than we had on our ponies across the Desert; but I think that, tired as I am of being so much and so long on horse-back, I shall, nevertheless, enjoy a ride on a good horse as long as I live.”

“May be I shall, too,” added Richard; “but

this rolling along over a smooth road is jolly. I like it."

At the beautifully situated city of Beirut* they found a steamer ready to sail the morning after their arrival, and were nothing loath to exchange the easy life of a voyage across the Mediterranean for the daily rides of their desert trip.

After landing at Marseilles they went by rail through France, from whence they crossed the English Channel, and took a steam-ship at Liverpool bound to their native land.

During their last day on board the steamer, the professor said to them :

"Well, young gentlemen, what have you gained by your journey to Bagdad?"

To this Richard laughingly replied :

"I have learned that there is no place like home."

"I knew that before I started," said Ronald ;
"but my journey has given me many new ideas about the upper part of the Arabian Desert,

* See Frontispiece.

about the geography of that part of the East, about the Arabs, about Haroun-al-Raschid, about the Turks, and about the benefit of traveling in other countries to young fellows like Dick and I. The world never looked so large to me as it does to-day, and dear old Boston never looked so delightful as I expect to find it to-morrow."

"Well, I see that you are quite as much of a Bostonian as your brother, Master Ronald," replied the professor. "You evidently think that good city to be the hub of the universe."

"It is the hub of *my* universe," rejoined the lad, laughing merrily at his own wit, and at the thought of being so near home.

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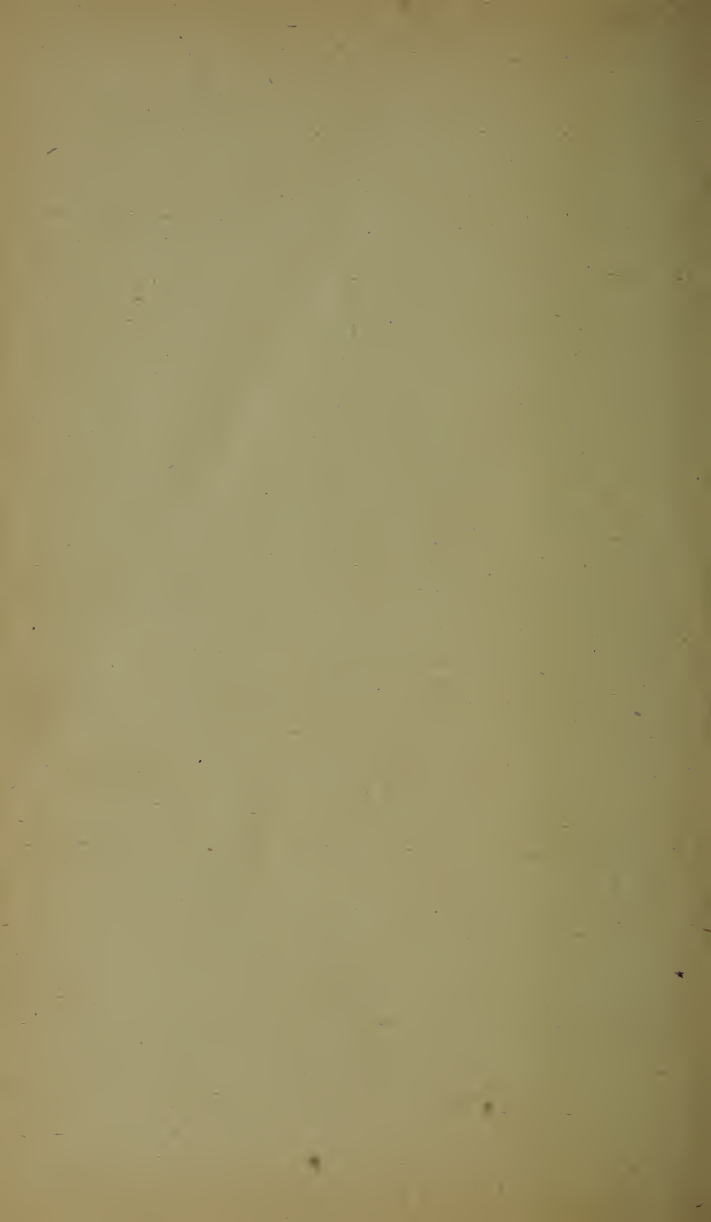
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